# HIDDEN TREASURE

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Mrs John Young
2721. Ferry Ave
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New York

# THE
# Hidden Treasure;

OR,

## THE VALUE AND EXCELLENCE
OF
## THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS;

WITH

PRACTICAL AND DEVOUT METHODS OF HEARING IT WITH PROFIT;

AND

DEVOTIONS FOR CONFESSION AND COMMUNION, &c.

BY

ST. LEONARD OF PORT MAURICE,
*Of the Order of St. Francis.*

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New Translation
By FR. JARLATH PRENDERGAST, O.F.M.
*THIRTEENTH EDITION, ENLARGED.*

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## PROTEST OF THE TRANSLATOR.

In obedience to the decrees of Urban the VIII., I declare that I have no intention of attributing any other than a purely human authority to the miracles, revelations, favours, and particular examples mentioned in this work; and that in bestowing the title of Saint or of Blessed, on any person not canonised or beatified by the Church, I only intend to do it according to the custom and opinion of men.

Collegio Inglese, Rome,
*February 15th*, 1895.

Dear Father,

I greatly rejoice to hear that a Second Edition is required of the *Hidden Treasure*. You cannot employ your life in a holier or more influential work than that of bringing to men's minds a knowledge and appreciation of the Holy Sacrifice.

There is nothing in this world more wonderful than the proofs and example of infinite love for us shown by God in the Mass. I wonder that we are not always speaking and thinking of the Mass, and of all that it contains for the soul of each one of us.

This great "*Mysterium fidei*" is in reality a great supernatural world, a great life of faith, which is far more diversified,

far more beautiful, far more satisfying, to the Christian mind and heart than anything, and than all things, that this material world of ours can offer.

All that is needed to enter into it and to enjoy it are the eyes and the heart of Faith.

God bless you for what you are doing to open these eyes and to warm this heart.

Believe me to be,

Your faithful and devoted,

HERBERT CARD. VAUGHAN.

REV. F. JARLATH PRENDERGAST,
THE FRIARY, KILLARNEY.

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# INTRODUCTION

## BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THIS little work by the *Great Missioner of the eighteenth century*, as St. Liguori called St. Leonard of Port Maurice, has been translated into almost all the languages of Europe. The two old versions in English have been repeatedly reprinted in Ireland, England, and America. The sale of the Dublin editions, issued first by John Coyne, and afterwards by Messrs. James Duffy and Co., has exceeded two hundred thousand copies during this century. This alone proves the popularity of the little Book; while the fruits of salvation derived from it are experienced every day, by the Missioners and Priests who recommend it to the faithful. In this translation we have omitted some pages relating to Italy, and to the times in which St. Leonard lived. These pages, and the rather too literal rendering of the original in the old English translations, detracted, in the view of many, from the usefulness of this otherwise very beautiful little Book. We have ever kept in mind in this version the words of one of the greatest masters of the English

language, the illustrious Cardinal Newman :* "In a book intended for general reading, faithfulness may be considered simply to consist in expressing in English the sense of the original, and where something must be sacrificed, precision or intelligibility, it is better in a popular work to be understood by those who are not critics than to be applauded by those who are." Hence we have tried to preserve throughout the simple style of the original, and to present an idiomatic rendering of the true sense, though not always necessarily the exact words of the holy Author.

Where a doubt arose about the sense of the original we have followed the authorized French translation of the works of St. Leonard, by Professor Labis of Tournai. The Method of Hearing Mass is taken, with a few additions and corrections, from the translation of the holy and learned Cardinal Gallifet, as here we have a Saint translating the words of a Saint. We hope to see this translation in all the Prayer Books which give this very popular and practical method of hearing Mass.

St. Leonard was born in the year 1676, at Port Maurice, a little town of Genoa, and

* "Historical Sketches," Preface, p. 21.

received, at baptism, the name of Paul Jerome. His father, who was a strict and fervent Catholic, had the happiness of giving three sons to the Seraphic Order, and an only daughter to a convent. St. Leonard, in after life, often thanked God for having given him such a good father. At the age of twelve or thirteen he was sent to study at the Roman College, then conducted by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. He made rapid progress in his studies; and gave such unmistakable proofs of his talents and piety that he was called the St. Aloysius of the College. In his twenty-second year, whilst studying for the medical profession, he was led to the Seraphic Order by the humble and mortified demeanour of two Franciscan Religious of the Convent of St. Bonaventure at Rome. He received the habit in this convent on the 2nd October 1697. During his Noviciate he was most exact in all the observances of the Religious life. He was then accustomed to say: "If now whilst we are young, we wilfully neglect little things, when we are old, and have greater liberty, we will neglect things of greater importance."

After his ordination he constantly wore a cross with seven sharp points on his breast; and he went to confession twice a day, "in

order," as he says, "to celebrate Holy Mass with the greatest possible purity of heart." He performed all the actions of the day as a preparation for this most Holy Sacrifice. When accused of celebrating too slowly he said: "Do you not know that it is my only consolation? O, if we had a lively faith we would never leave the altar." In his last illness, he was advised by the Brother Infirmarian to omit his daily Mass, but he answered: "O, my dear Brother, one Mass is worth all the treasures of the world." No wonder, then, he speaks with words of fire when treating of "this most solemn and divine act of Christian religion." * We are certain no one can read his words, without feeling his heart burning with love for Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrifice. May all those who use this little Book be imbued with the spirit of St. Leonard, and thus secure for themselves the blessings he so often promises to those who attend daily Mass with devotion: "a holy life, a happy death, and the eternal joys of heaven."

THE FRIARY, KILLARNEY,
*Feast of All Saints*, 1893.

* See Cardinal Vaughan's beautiful Manual, "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

# ST. LEONARD OF PORT MAURICE

## TO THE READER.

A TREASURE is appreciated only in as much as it is known. Hence, dear readers, there are so few who value as they ought the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Although it is the greatest of all treasures which enrich the Church of God, it is still a hidden treasure, known only to a few privileged souls. If this celestial pearl were but known, every one would give all he had to purchase it. There would not, then, be found a single person who would dare use these scandalous words: "A Mass more or less is of no consequence." But, like the merchant in the Gospel, he would give all his fortune to render himself master of a treasure so priceless. "*He went and sold all that he possessed, and bought it.*" (Matt. xiii. 46.) It is, then, for those who do not realise such an adorable mystery of love that I have written this little book.

It may, however, happen that you judge it superfluous or presumptuous on my part to publish such a work; and indeed it would seem so. *Superfluous*, for there are already so many beautiful little books on the subject; and *presumptuous*, as it would

require a mind superior to mine to make known the excellencies of a mystery which surpass the understanding of the highest seraphim. I acknowledge that these considerations held me back for a long time from publishing this treatise, and I have felt the greatest repugnance to write a work likely to be judged as useless, or above my ability. Two motives, however, enable me to overcome this innate reluctance. The first is a counsel which I respect as a command from one whom I am bound to obey on many titles. The second motive is the well-founded hope of being of use to the people to whom I have preached on the missions. For one of the greatest fruits derived from the missions is the increase of devotion and love towards the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. Missioners excite in the hearts of the faithful a holy fervour by which they are led to frequent the Sacraments and to nourish their souls with the Bread of Angels, as well as to pay all honour and respect to the Most Holy Viaticum, when brought to the sick. During these days of grace, we also endeavour to impress on our hearers the great advantages and fruits to be gained by attendance at daily Mass; but our words are easily forgotten by them

unless they have some little books, composed in a plain and simple style, and adapted to their intelligence, which may remind them of these saving truths. Such books clear away all difficulties in the way of devotion, whilst, at the same time, they enlighten the mind and inflame the heart in the practice of every good work. Were, then, this little book, to be of aid but to only one soul, it cannot be judged useless. In order, however, to render it more useful, and more easily understood, it will be divided into three chapters. The first will contain a short instruction on the nature, excellence, necessity and advantages of Holy Mass. In the second chapter, there will be taught a practical and devout method of hearing Mass with fruit. The third chapter will have some touching examples, to excite the zeal of persons of every state of life to assist at Holy Mass.

Such are the motives which ought to enlist your sympathy for this little book, even though you may deem me presumptuous to publish it. I am, however, confident that if you read it with the right dispositions, before you have finished, you will discover a Hidden Treasure, which, if you know how to profit by, will enrich you with every blessing in time and in eternity.

# The Hidden Treasure.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE EXCELLENCE, NECESSITY, AND ADVANTAGES OF THE MOST HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

I. It requires great patience to bear with the language of certain worldlings whom we hear every day, say: "A Mass more or less is of no consequence."—"It is hard enough to be obliged to assist at Mass on days of obligation."—"The Mass of that priest is as long as one in Holy Week: when I see him go to the altar, I hurry out of the church." Such language is the bane of piety, and betrays a spirit of libertinism and irreligion. For he who speaks in this manner, shows unmistakably that he has little or no respect for the most holy sacrifice of the Mass. Have you considered what is the holy sacrifice of the Mass? It is the sun of Christianity, the soul of Faith, the centre of the Catholic religion, the grand object of all her rites, ceremonies,

and Sacraments; in a word, it is the summary of all that is good and beautiful in the Church of God. Now, let me beseech you, who read these pages, to reflect seriously on what I say in the following instructions.

§ I.

EXCELLENCE OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

II. It is an undeniable truth, that all nations which have existed since the beginning of the world, have ever had a sacrifice as an essential part of the worship which they offered to God. But as their religions were either vain or imperfect, so likewise were their sacrifices either vain or imperfect. Vainest of all vain things were the sacrifices of the idolaters, nor need we prove this truth of Holy Writ. The sacrifices of the Hebrews, although they professed the true religion, are justly called by St. Paul *weak and poor elements* (Gal. iv. 9), because they could not forgive sin or confer grace. The one great Sacrifice of our holy religion, the Holy Mass, is alone holy, perfect, and in every respect complete. For, by it the Faithful render the highest honour to God, and, at the same time, acknowledge their own nothingness and

the supreme dominion He has over all His creatures. The Royal Prophet called this sacrifice the *Sacrifice of justice* (Ps. iv. 5), as it contains the Just One, or rather Justice and Sanctity Itself; and because it sanctifies souls by the infusion of divine grace, and replenishes them with the richest gifts of heaven. As it is, then, a sacrifice so holy and so excellent, we shall consider briefly some of the great treasures contained in this Divine Gift. I say *some* of these treasures, as it would be impossible for us to enumerate, or explain them all.

### 1.—The Sacrifice of the Mass is the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross.

III. The principal excellence of the Sacrifice of the Mass consists in this, that it is essentially the same, yea, the very same, Sacrifice that was offered on the Cross of Calvary; the only difference being that, the Sacrifice of the Cross was a *bloody* sacrifice and made once for all, and did then fully satisfy for all the sins of the world; whereas the Sacrifice of the Altar is an *unbloody* Sacrifice, which can be repeated throughout all ages, and which was instituted in order to apply to each of us the universal atonement which Christ made for us on

Calvary. In a word: the *bloody* Sacrifice was the instrument of redemption, and the *unbloody* Sacrifice puts us in possession of it; the one opened to us the treasury of the merits of Christ our Lord, and the other gives us the practical use of that never-failing treasury. Hence, we must ever bear in mind that, in the Mass, there is made not a mere representation, nor a simple commemoration of the Passion and Death of our Redeemer, but, in a certain true sense, there is offered the very same most Holy Sacrifice which was offered on Calvary. It may then be said, with all truth, our Redeemer returns to die mystically for us, although in reality He can die no more; at one and the same time, He is alive, and as it were slain again, according to that passage of the Apocalypse, "*I saw a lamb standing as it were slain.*" (Apoc. v. 6.) On Christmas Day the Church represents the birth of our Lord, but our Lord is not then born. At the Ascension and Whitsuntide the Church recalls to mind the ascent of our Lord to heaven, and the coming of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles and disciples; still, it is not true that, as each of these festivals returns, Our Lord ascends to heaven, and the Holy Ghost visibly descends to earth. But the same

cannot be said of the mystery of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for here there is not made simply a representation of a past event, but the very same Sacrifice which was offered on the Cross is offered on the Altar, though in an unbloody manner. That same Body, that same Blood, that same Jesus Who then offered Himself on Calvary, now offers Himself in the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. "The work of our redemption," says the Church, "is here carried on;" yes, indeed, the Divine Work is continually carried on; for, in Holy Mass there is unceasingly offered the same Sacrifice as that which was offered on the Cross. O wonderful work of God!

Now, tell me sincerely, when you go to the Church to hear Mass, do you clearly realise that you are approaching Calvary, to be present at the death of your Redeemer? If this truth sank deeply into your heart, would you dare to enter the holy place with such a distracted air, or with such unbecoming apparel? If Magdalen had gone to Calvary, to the foot of the Cross, dressed out, perfumed and adorned, as in the time of her sinful life, what would have been said of her? But what ought to be said, if you profane the holy rites of the Church with tattle and laughter, with

improper glances or sacrilegious thoughts, words, or deeds? Iniquity is detested by God at all times and in all places; but the sins committed under the shadow of the altar draw down the signal chastisement of God, Who says in Holy Writ, "*Cursed be he who doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.*" (Jer. xlviii. 10.) Think seriously on this, while I continue to show you other marvels and glories of this most precious treasure.

2.—In the Sacrifice of the Mass Jesus Christ is the Principal Priest: Duty of the Celebrant and the Faithful.

IV. It seems to me impossible for any religious rite to have a more excellent prerogative than this we have now considered; but its dignity is still more enhanced by having for its priest none other than God Himself, Jesus Christ, the Man-God. In this great Sacrifice three things must never be forgotten: the Priest who offers, the Victim offered, and the Majesty of Him to Whom the offering is made. Now reflect on the wonderful glory of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and let each of these three considerations be deeply impressed on your soul. The Priest who offers this Sacrifice is the Man-God, Christ Jesus; the victim

of the Sacrifice is the life of God; nor is the Sacrifice offered to any other than to God. Revive then your faith, and recognise as the true celebrant, not so much the visible priest whom you see at the Altar, as the adorable Person of Jesus Christ Himself. He is the primary offerer, not only because He has instituted this Holy Sacrifice, and has not only given to it all its efficacy, through His infinite merits, but also in each Mass He Himself, for love of us, deigns to change the bread and wine into His Most Holy Body and Most Precious Blood. Behold, then, the grandest privilege of the Most Holy Sacrifice, to have for priest, the Man-God; and when you see the celebrant at the Altar, remember that his greatest dignity consists in being the minister of this invisible and eternal Priest, our Divine Redeemer.

Hence, it follows that the Sacrifice itself cannot cease to be agreeable to God, no matter what may be the unworthiness of the priest who celebrates, since the principal offerer is Christ our Lord, and the priest is merely His simple minister. In the same way as a person who gives alms by the hands of a servant is rightly called the giver, and even though his servant may be sinful or wicked, when the master is

good, the alms do not fail to have their reward. Blessed then be God, Who hath bestowed on us a Holy and Most Holy Priest, Who offers to the Eternal Father this Divine Sacrifice, not only in every place—as the Catholic religion is now propagated in most countries of the world —but every day, and even every hour, since the sun rises for others when it sets for us; and so, at every hour of the day and night this Most Holy Priest offers to His Father, His Body, His Blood, His Soul, His entire Self for us. All this He does as often as the Holy Sacrifice is celebrated in the whole world. O happy should we be if we could assist at all these Masses! O immense treasure! O mine of inexhaustible wealth, thus possessed by us in the Church of God! What an ocean of graces in this life, what a fund of glory in the next, would not the devout attendance at all these Most Holy Sacrifices procure for us!

V. But why do I use the word *attendance?* For those who hear Mass not only fulfil the office of attendants at it, but they are likewise offerers, and have a right to the title of priests, according to the Apocalypse, "*Thou hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests.*" (Apoc. v. 10.) The celebrant is, as it were, the public minister

of the Church in general, and at the same time a mediator for all the faithful, and particularly for those who assist at Mass with the invisible Priest who is Christ; and together with Christ he offers to the Eternal Father, both in behalf of all mankind and of himself, the great price of human redemption. But the celebrant is not alone in this august function, since all those who assist at Mass unite with him in offering the Holy Sacrifice; and therefore he turns to the people and says, "Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God," in order that we may understand that, although he acts the part of the visible minister, all those who are present make the great offering with him. Hence, when you assist at Mass, you perform in a certain manner the office of priest. Will you, then, ever again dare to hear Mass, sitting, whispering, looking here and there, perhaps even sleeping, or will you content yourself with reciting some distracted vocal prayers, entirely ignoring the tremendous office of a priest which you are exercising? Alas! I cannot refrain from crying out: "O dull and senseless world, that will not understand such sublime mysteries!" Now, is it possible anyone can remain with a mind distracted and a

heart dissipated, at a time when the holy angels fall down in lowly adoration, trembling and astounded at the contemplation of such a stupendous work of Divine Goodness?

### 3.—The Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most Wonderful Work of God.

VI. You are astonished, perhaps, to hear me call the Mass a stupendous work. But what tongue, human or angelic, can ever describe a power so immeasurable as that exercised by the priest at Mass? And who could have ever imagined that the voice of a man, which, of itself, is not able to raise a straw from the ground, should be endowed with a power so stupendous as to bring the Son of God from Heaven to earth: This power far exceeds that which would be required to move mountains, to dry up seas, or to govern the movements of the heavenly bodies; nay more, it rivals in a certain way that first *fiat* by which God created all things out of nothing; and in some manner it would seem to surpass that other *fiat* by which the Blessed Virgin drew down to her bosom the Eternal Word.

The Blessed John Buono of Mantua* gave a very beautiful illustration of this to

* S. Ant. 3. p. Hist. tit. 24. c. 13.

his companion, a hermit, who was unable to imagine how the words of a priest could be endowed with such a tremendous power, as to be able to change the substance of bread into the body of Jesus Christ, and the substance of wine into His Blood. This unfortunate hermit had, moreover, unhappily consented to this temptation which the devil suggested. The holy servant of God, perceiving the poor sinful man's error, led him to a fountain from which he drew a vessel of water and gave it to him to drink. After he had drunk he protested that he never before, during his whole life, had tasted such delicious wine. Then Blessed John Buono said to him, "Dear brother, does not this convince you of the marvellous truth of which you doubt? If you believe, that through me, a miserable creature, water is changed into wine by Divine Power, how much more ought you to believe, that, by virtue of the words pronounced by the priest, which are the words of God, the bread and wine are converted into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ. And who will dare limit the power of God Almighty?" This so effectually enlightened the mind of the hermit, that, banishing every doubt from his heart, he did great penance for his sin.

Let us have faith, but let it be a lively faith, and it will convince us that the unspeakable excellences contained in this adorable Sacrifice are without number. Then we shall not be surprised to see this miracle of the Saviour's Power, renewing His Humanity thousands and thousands of times, at every hour, and in every place. For the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ enjoys a sort of ubiquity, not granted to other bodies, but bestowed on Him through the merits of His life, sacrificed to the Will of His Father.

This multiplied existence of our Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament was explained to an unbelieving Jew by an ignorant poor woman: The Jew was standing in the public street, where there was a great crowd, and among them this poor woman, and at the moment a priest approached carrying the Most Holy Viaticum to a sick person. All the Faithful knelt and adored the Most Blessed Sacrament, as It passed; but the Jew alone moved not, nor showed any sign of reverence. This being seen by the poor woman, she cried out to the Jew, "O miserable wretch, why do you not show reverence to the true God present in the Most Holy Sacrament?" "What true God?" answered the Jew; "if the true God

were there it would follow that there are many gods, as you say there is one on each of your altars during Mass." The woman immediately took a sieve and placing it between the Jew's eyes and the sun, told him to look at the rays which shone through the apertures. When he had done so, she said to him, "Tell me now, Jew, are there many suns or only one passing through the openings in this sieve?" The Jew answering said that there was but one sun. "Then," replied the woman, "why dost thou wonder if the God-Man, veiled in the Sacrament, though one, indivisible and unchanged, should, through excess of love for us, leave Himself really and truly present on different altars at the same time?"

This simple illustration convinced the unbelieving Jew, and forced him to acknowledge this great truth of our holy Faith. O holy Faith! a single ray of thy divine light is sufficient to enable the most illiterate to refute the captious questions of the enemies of religion. Who shall ever dare to assign limits to the almighty power of God? St. Teresa had such a conception of the omnipotence of God that she used to say, "The more incomprehensible, deep, and abstruse the mysteries of our holy faith are to our understanding, the firmer

and more devoutly ought we to believe them." She was, indeed, justified in expressing herself thus, knowing that God Almighty can perform works infinitely greater than our limited intelligences can comprehend. Revive then your faith and acknowledge that this Divine Sacrifice is the miracle of miracles, the marvel of marvels, and that its greatest excellence consists in being incomprehensible to our limited understandings. Amazed at such wonderful goodness of God, never cease repeating, "O inestimable treasure! treasure of love, treasure beyond all human comprehension!" But if you are not touched as yet by its marvellous excellence, be so, at least, by its absolute necessity.

## § II.

### NECESSITY OF THE MOST HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS TO APPEASE THE DIVINE JUSTICE.

VII. What would be the condition of the earth, if there were no sun in the heavens? Alas! all would be darkness, barrenness, and supreme misery. And if we had not Holy Mass, what would become of us? Wretched, assuredly would our condition be, deprived of every good, overwhelmed

with every evil; we should then be a mark for the thunderbolts of God's Justice. Some persons are astonished at the change taken place in the government of the world, by Divine Providence, since olden times. Then, indeed, He was called the God of armies, and spoke to His people in thunder and lightning, and as Holy Writ shows us, He punished sinners with all the rigours of His Justice. For one adultery He put five-and-twenty thousand of the tribe of Benjamin to the sword. On account of an act of vain-glory on the part of King David, who made a census of his kingdom, God sent a dreadful plague that swept away seventy thousand of the people. For one irreverent glance at the Ark, He slew fifty thousand Bethsamites. Yet, in our days, He bears with, not only vanities and curiosities without number, but crimes the most abominable and blasphemies the most frightful, which some Christians commit unceasingly against His Adorable Person. How, then, can we account for this difference in His mode of governing the world? Is it because our ingratitude is more excusable than that of former times? Quite the contrary. We are far more inexcusable, as we have received greater graces than those under the Old Law. But, the true reason

of this astonishing clemency on the part of God, is the Holy Mass, in which the "Lamb without spot" offers Himself unceasingly to the Eternal Father to atone for the sins of men. Behold, then, the sun of Holy Church which scatters the clouds, and renders heaven again serene! Behold the heavenly rainbow which stills the storms of Divine wrath! For myself, I firmly believe, that were it not for Holy Mass the world would, long ago, have been engulphed in the abyss, crushed under the heavy weight of its iniquities. Holy Mass is, then, the powerful and immoveable pillar which sustains the world, and prevents it from falling back into original chaos. This thought, alone, ought to be sufficient to convince us of the absolute necessity of the Divine Sacrifice.

But this conviction is of little use unless we know how to profit by it, when present at Holy Mass. Hence, when assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, we ought to follow the example of the celebrated conqueror of the East Indies, Alphonsus D'Albequerque. This famous captain, seeing his fleet in danger of perishing during a dreadful storm, took a tender child and holding him up to heaven, he cried out: "If we are sinners, this child is certainly free from sin. Then,

O Lord, for love of this innocent babe, save us guilty sinners from death." Would you believe it? The sight of that innocent child touched the Heart of God: the storm was stilled: the sea became calm, and the horrors of an impending death were changed into transports of joy. Now, what think you, does the Eternal Father do when the priest raises the Sacred Host between heaven and earth, and presents to Him the innocence of His well-beloved Son? Assuredly His tender mercies cannot resist the sight of this "Lamb without spot." Almighty God feels Himself, as it were, obliged to calm the storms that assail us, and to provide for all our necessities. Be assured, if it were not for this Adorable Victim, sacrificed once upon the Cross, and now daily offered upon the Altar, we should be forced to say to each other: "Adieu until we meet in hell." But, this treasure of Holy Mass revives our hopes and encourages us to look forward to the never-fading crown of glory reserved for the elect in heaven. We ought, then, centre our hearts' affections on the altar and offer it the choicest and most precious gifts we can bestow; but, above all, we must honour, by our modesty and piety, the Adorable Presence of Jesus Christ; for He is the

source of every blessing we receive from Heaven. Let us now join our hands, and with hearts thrilling with holy love, let us gratefully thank the Eternal Father for having placed us in the necessity of offering to Him this heavenly Victim ; and, still more, let us thank Him for the countless blessings we draw from Holy Mass, if we be but faithful, not only in offering this Sacrifice, but in offering it for the sublime ends for which He bestowed a treasure so precious.

## § III.

### ADVANTAGES DERIVED FROM HOLY MASS.

#### 1.—Holy Mass pays all the Debts we owe Almighty God.

VIII. A sense of virtue and honour has a great influence upon the heart of man ; but what tends to his own advantage has a still greater power to stimulate his efforts, and to enable him to overcome every obstacle in his way. If, then, you do not, as yet, value the excellence and the intrinsic worth of Holy Mass, you cannot fail, at least, to appreciate the immense treasures it bestows on the living and the dead, on the just and sinners, in this world

and in the world to come. Imagine, now, you are the debtor of the Gospel, who overwhelmed by the heavy debt of ten thousand talents, and commanded to pay, excuse yourself and piteously plead for time to satisfy your obligations: "*Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*" (St. Matt. xviii. 29.) This you should also do, who owe not only one but many thousand debts to Divine Justice. You ought to humble yourself, and beg as much time as is needed for hearing Holy Mass, and be assured you will thus fully satisfy all your obligations, and pay all your debts. The Angelic Doctor teaches us what these debts are which we owe to God; they are specially four, and each of them is infinite:—

The *first* is to praise and honour the infinite majesty of God, which is infinitely worthy of all the praise and honour the creature can give Him.

The *second* is to satisfy for the many sins committed against His Infinite Majesty.

The *third* is to thank Him for the many favours received from Him.

The *fourth* is to supplicate Him as the giver of all good gifts.

Now, how can we, miserable creatures, who depend on God for the very air we breathe, be able to repay Him for debts so

numerous and so weighty? Let me at once, therefore, show you the easiest way of doing so; and let me add that this way of satisfying Divine Justice is one that must console me, you, and the whole world:— Let us take care to attend with all possible devotion as many Masses as we can; and let us strive to have them celebrated frequently for our intention; and no matter how numerous or heavy these debts may be, there is not the least doubt but that we shall be able to discharge them all, fully and adequately, by the treasures we can draw from the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But in order that you may have a fuller knowledge of each of these debts, we shall explain them one by one; and, you will then find a subject of great consolation in considering the inexhaustible wealth you possess for their payment in such a rich mine, from which you can draw on all occasions when you assist at holy Mass.

### 2.—First Debt: To Praise and Glorify God.

IX. The *first* debt which we owe to God is the duty of rendering Him supreme honour. It is a precept of the natural law that every inferior ought to show homage to his superior, and the greater his dignity

the greater also ought to be the homage due to him. Hence, it follows that, as God is infinitely great, we ought to return Him an homage worthy of His infinite greatness, But, where can we, miserable creatures, find any offering worthy of His infinite greatness? Seek as you may among all the creatures of the universe, you will not find one worthy of God. For, an offering worthy of God must be God Himself. And He, Who is seated on the throne of His own infinite greatness, it is, Who must descend and place Himself as a victim on our altars, in order that our homage may perfectly correspond with the immensity of His Infinite Majesty. This is what takes place in Holy Mass. Almighty God is here honoured as He deserves, because He is honoured by God Himself. Jesus Christ, the Man-God, places Himself as our Victim on the altar, and adores the Most Holy Trinity with an act of incomprehensible submission, such as no one else can offer. For, all the offerings of all creatures compared to this self-humiliation of our Divine Redeemer are as the feeble glimmering of the stars before the splendours of the midday sun. It is related of a holy woman who, inflamed with the love of God and the desire of His glory, cried out: "O my God

would that I had as many hearts and as many tongues as there are leaves on the trees, atoms in the air, and drops of water in the ocean, to praise and glorify Thee as much as Thou deservest. Oh, that I had all creatures in my hands to place them at Thy feet, so that all might be consumed with Thy love, and that I may love Thee more than all of them together; more than the Angels, the Saints, and all Paradise itself." One day when she thus expressed herself with the greatest fervour, she heard our Lord answering her: "Console yourself, My daughter; by one Mass you hear with devotion, you will render Me all that glory you desire and infinitely more."* You wonder, perhaps, at this, but you are wrong; for Jesus is not only Man, but true and omnipotent God, and by humbling Himself on the altar, He offers to the Most Holy Trinity an infinite homage; so that we who unite with Him in offering this great sacrifice are thus enabled to present to God a homage and an honour which is also infinite. O stupendous truth! Let us repeat it over and over again, since it can never be too deeply engraven on our minds:—"Certainly, even we, by hearing Holy

* S. Jure p. 3. c. 10.

Mass with devotion, can render God an honour and a homage that is infinite." Be now confounded with amazement and wonder, while reflecting on this great truth, that a soul assisting devoutly at Holy Mass can give God more honour than that which all the Angels and Saints together can render Him with all their adorations. For, after all, they, like ourselves, are mere creatures, and their homage is therefore limited and finite, whereas in the Mass, Jesus humbles Himself, a humiliation which is infinite in value and merit, and consequently the homage and honour which we render through Him in the Mass is a homage and an honour which is infinite. And since this grand truth cannot be doubted, ought we not to congratulate ourselves to be able to satisfy this first debt by assisting worthily at the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? O blind world! when will you open your eyes to understand a truth so grand and so important, and which so concerns your welfare. And yet, alas, you have the folly to say, "A Mass more or less, what does it matter?" O dreadful blindness!

### 3.—Second Debt: To Satisfy the Divine Justice for our Sins.

X. Our *second* debt or obligation; by which we are bound towards God, is to satisfy His Justice for our numberless and enormous sins. O what a weighty debt is this! One single mortal sin outweighs in the scale of divine Justice all the good works of all the Martyrs, and of all the Saints who have ever existed, who live now, or who shall live to the end of time. And yet, by means of the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, on account of its intrinsic value and holiness, we are enabled to make a complete and adequate satisfaction for all the sins we have ever committed.

But, in order that you may clearly understand how much you are indebted to Jesus Christ, consider seriously what I now say to you. Although He is the very person Who has been offended and outraged by our sins, yet, not content with having satisfied the Divine Justice for us on Calvary, He continuously gives us the same means of satisfying for them in the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For there is renewed in the Mass that offering which Jesus Christ had already made on the Cross to the

Eternal Father for the sins of the whole world; that same Divine Blood which He poured out for the ransom of the entire human race, is there again shed for our souls; and the Mass is thus specially applied to each and every one of us, as it is offered for the sins of him who celebrates and for those who assist at so tremendous a sacrifice. But I must not be understood to say, that the Mass by any means cancels our sins *immediately* by itself, as the Sacrament of Penance does, for it only cancels them *mediately*, by obtaining for us various aids, such as interior impulses, holy inspirations, and actual grace; all of which conduce to a true repentance for our sins, either during Mass, or at some other fitting time. For this reason, no one can know but God Himself, how many souls rise out of the slough of sin through the extraordinary aid they receive from the most Holy Sacrifice. Here I must add, that although it may happen that a person in mortal sin may not be aided by way of *propitiation*, it however aids him by way of *supplication*; hence all sinners ought to hear as many Masses as possible, in order that they may obtain the grace of conversion. To souls, however, who live in grace, it gives a wonderful strength, which enables them to remain

in their happy state, and it cancels all venial sins for which there is a general contrition, according to these words of St. Augustine: "Whoever hears Holy Mass devoutly shall receive great strength to preserve himself from mortal sin, and he shall be pardoned all his venial sins."*

Nor should this surprise us, if we bear in mind what St. Gregory† relates of a poor woman, who had Mass celebrated every Monday for her husband, who had been taken captive by the Barbarians, and whom, she believed, to be dead. These Masses caused the chains to fall from his feet, and the handcuffs from his wrists; so that during the whole time the Divine Sacrifice was being offered for him he found himself perfectly free, as he afterwards assured his wife when restored to liberty. If this be so, how much more ought we to believe that the Holy Sacrifice shall break our spiritual chains, such as venial sins, which hold our souls captive and prevent us from acting freely and generously as we would do, if delivered from this spiritual slavery. O thrice Holy Mass, which thus

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**Supra Can. Quia passus, De Consecr.* Dist. 2.

† Dialogues, c. 57.

procures us the liberty of the children of God, and satisfies for all the punishment due to our sins!

XI. But, you will now, perhaps, say to me: "It is then sufficient to hear one single Mass, or have one Mass celebrated to get rid of all those weighty debts due to God, on account of the many sins we have committed; because the Mass, being of infinite value, we can thereby render to God an infinite satisfaction." Do not, I beseech you, make such a hasty conclusion. The Mass, it is true, is of infinite value in itself, but Almighty God accepts it only in a finite and limited manner, and in accordance with the greater or less perfection in the dispositions of him who celebrates, for whom it is offered, or of him who assists at the Sacrifice. "Whose faith and devotion are known to Thee," says Holy Church, in the Canon of the Mass. The Church thus teaches us by these words of the Canon what great Divines hold,* "That the greater or less satisfaction applied in our behalf by the Sacrifice is measured by the greater or less dispositions of the celebrant or the assistants," as already mentioned. Consider, then, the folly of those who wish

* Lugo, Dist. 9. n. 103.

and seek for Masses celebrated in a hurried manner, and, what is worse, assist at them with little or no devotion. Reflect also with shame on the culpable indifference of those who never have Masses celebrated for their spiritual and temporal welfare. It is certain, according to St. Thomas, that all sacrifices of the Mass as Sacrifices, are equal in dignity ; but they are not equal as regards the effects that flow from them ; hence, the greater the actual or habitual piety of the Celebrant, the greater also will be the fruit of the application of the Mass ; so that to make no distinction in this matter is to be indifferent whether the net you fish with be small or large. The same can be said of those who assist at Mass.

Although I most earnestly exhort you to hear as many Masses as you can, I yet feel bound to say, that you must have more regard for the devotion in hearing them than for the number heard. If you have more devotion in one single Mass than another man in fifty, you will give more honour to God in that single Mass, and you will derive more benefit from it, in the way called *ex opere operantis* than the other will from his fifty. "In satisfaction," says St. Thomas, "the disposition of the person offering is more regarded than the quantity of the

oblation."* It is indeed true, that, as a grave author asserts in certain cases, one single Mass heard with extraordinary fervour and devotion may satisfy the justice of God for all the transgressions of a great sinner. And this is quite in harmony with what the Council of Trent teaches, namely: "That in the offering of this Holy Sacrifice, God grants the gift of repentance, and then by means of this true repentance He pardons sins the most grievous and enormous."† Yet, notwithstanding all this, since neither the interior dispositions with which you assist at Mass are manifest to yourself, nor the satisfaction which corresponds thereto, you ought to strive to hear as many Masses as you can, and with all the devotion possible, that you may with greater certainty gain these extraordinary fruits of the Most Holy Sacrifice. Blessed shall you be if you cherish a great confidence in the loving mercy of God, which shines forth so wonderfully in this most Holy Mystery. Thrice happy, above all, shall you be if you assist as often as possible with a lively faith and devout recollection at Holy Mass; for, I am certain if you do this, with perseverance,

* 3. p. g. 79, art. 5.
† Sess. xxii. cap. 2.

you will have a secure hope of escaping Purgatory and going straight to the bosom of God for ever in heaven. Go then to Mass! Go regularly to Mass! Never again let such scandalous words escape you as, "A Mass more or less is of little consequence."

### 4.—Third Debt: Thanksgiving for the Benefits received from God.

XII. Our *third* debt is one of gratitude for the countless benefits which our most loving God has bestowed on us. Place together all the gifts and all the graces you have received from God; so many gifts of nature and grace,—body, soul, senses, faculties, health, and life itself; add to all these the very life of His Son Jesus Christ, and the death that He suffered for love of us, and does not all this increase a thousand fold the debt you owe to God? But how shall we ever be able sufficiently to thank Him? If the law of gratitude is observed by the wild beasts, whose fierce nature is often changed into gentleness towards their benefactors, how much more ought it not to be observed by man gifted as he is with reason, and so nobly endowed by the Divine liberality? But unhappily our poverty is so great that we have no means of making

adequate return for the least of these countless favours; as the very least of them coming from the hand of a Majesty so great, and accompanied as it is by an infinite love, acquires an infinite value which obliges us to an infinite correspondence in the way of reverence and love. O poor and wretched creatures that we are! If we cannot repay one single benefit, how can we ever be able to repay so many and so countless? We are thus placed in the cruel necessity of living and dying, ungrateful to our Sovereign Benefactor.

But, thank God, this shall not be, for the manner of showing our gratitude to that generous Benefactor, and of fully requiting Him for all His favours is taught us by the Royal Prophet, who, led by divine inspiration, clearly indicates that nothing, save Holy Mass, can render due thanks to God. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits to me?" says this holy King, and then answering himself, he continues, "I will take the cup of salvation," or, according to another version, "I will raise on high the chalice of the Lord," that is, I will offer a sacrifice most acceptable to Him, and with this alone I shall satisfy the debt of so many and such signal favours.

Remember also that the Most Holy

Sacrifice was instituted by our Redeemer principally for this end, that is, to acknowledge the Divine bounty and as a *thank-offering* to His Goodness. Hence it is called the *Eucharistic* Sacrifice, and the *Eucharist* or *Thank-offering*. He Himself gave us the example, when at the Last Supper before consecration, in that first Mass, He raised His eyes to heaven, and gave thanks to His heavenly Father. O divine thanksgiving! which discovers to us the sublime end for which this tremendous Sacrifice was instituted, and which invites us to conform ourselves to our Head; so that at every Mass at which we assist we may know how to make good use of so great a treasure, by offering it in gratitude to our Supreme Benefactor. And, that we may perform this act with greater zeal and devotion, let us always remember that all Paradise, the Blessed Virgin and the Angels and Saints rejoice when we offer this, our tribute of thanks, to our great King.

XIII. We read in the life of the Venerable Sister Francesca Farnese, that her whole life was troubled with a thousand anxieties how she could return love for love to God. She often lamented to see herself covered over from head to foot with divine blessings, without knowing how to return

adequate thanks to her Lord for the least of these benefits bestowed on her. On one of these occasions, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Francesca, and placed the heavenly Babe, her Divine Son, in Francesca's arms. "Take Him," she said, "for He is yours, and with Him alone you will easily discharge all your obligations to His Father." O thrice Blessed Mass, which places the Son of God not only in our arms but also in our hearts! *A Son is given to us* (Is. ix. 6), that we may be able to do with Him, Him alone, what would be otherwise impossible to our human weakness, as most assuredly with Him we can fully and adequately discharge the debt of gratitude we owe to Almighty God. Yea, in the Holy Mass, in a certain way, we give to God something more than what He has bestowed on us, not in reality of course, but in appearance; since once only the Eternal Father has given us His Divine Son in the Incarnation, while we give Him back to Him times without number, in the Most Holy Sacrifice. Thus it seems we have the advantage, not indeed in the quality of the gift, since nothing greater than the Son of God could have been given to us, but in giving back to Him so often and so continuously the self-same Gift.

O great God! O most loving God! Would that we had tongues infinite in number and power to return Thee infinite thanks for so great a treasure! If hitherto it has lain a treasure hidden from you, now that you have discovered its surpassing value, can you fail to exclaim over and over again, "O treasure of treasures! O treasure beyond all price!"

5.—Fourth Debt: To Ask New Graces.

XIV. But the infinite benefit of Holy Mass does not end here; for it enables us also to pay the *fourth* debt due to God. I have already said that this debt obliges us to supplicate Him and to ask new graces of Him. You know full well that your necessities of soul and body are great and manifold; and you feel every moment of your existence how necessary it is to have recourse to Him, as He alone is the chief source, the Beginning and the End of all your good, whether temporal or eternal. On the other hand, what heart can you have to ask for His favours, seeing the utter ingratitude which you have shown Him for the many graces already bestowed on you? Have you not even turned the very graces He gave you into offences

against Him? But still, let not your heart lose courage; for, if you have not deserved these graces, our good Jesus has deserved them for you. In fact, for this end He has become a pacifying Victim—a *supplicatory* sacrifice to obtain from the Eternal Father all things you may require.

In the Holy Mass our dear and beloved Jesus, Who is our great High Priest, recommends our cause to His Father, prays for us, and becomes Himself our Advocate. If we knew that the Blessed Virgin was united with us in prayer to the Eternal Father, to obtain the graces we desired, what confidence we should have of being heard? What hope, then, what confidence should we not have, when we know that in the Mass, Jesus Himself prays for us, offers His most precious Blood to the Eternal Father for us, and makes Himself our advocate. O thrice blessed Mass, thou art the mine of all our good!

But we must dig deeper into this mine in order to discover more of the vast treasures it contains. O what priceless gems of grace and virtue lie there! O what precious gifts the Holy Mass draws down from heaven! In the first place, it brings down all spiritual graces, all the goods of the soul, such as true sorrow and repentance

for sin, victory over temptations, no matter of what kind, whether from external trials, bad companions, and the infernal spirits, or those arising from the internal rebellion of our fallen nature. Yes, the Holy Mass obtains for us all those aids of grace which we need to rise from the mire of sin, to stand erect, and to walk forward in the ways of God.

It likewise merits innumerable holy inspirations and interior impulses, which dispose us to shake off tepidity, and excite us to work out our salvation with greater fervour, with a more prompt will, and with a purer and more meritorious intention. These again contain an inestimable treasure, as they are the most efficacious means to obtain from God the grace of final perseverance—on which depends our eternal salvation—and a moral certainty of eternal bliss, as much as that certainty is vouchsafed to man during his mortal pilgrimage.

Furthermore, it procures for us temporal blessings, inasmuch as they are conducive to the salvation of the soul; such as health of body, a decent competency, peace of mind and heart, and the exclusion of the contrary evils, such as pestilences, earthquakes, wars, famines, persecutions, hatreds, calumnies, and injuries of every sort. In

a word, the Holy Mass delivers us from all evil and enriches us with every good. Truly then the Mass is the golden key of Paradise; and as the Eternal Father has given us this key of heaven, which of all His boundless treasures can He refuse us? "*He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things?*" (Rom. viii. 32).

We can now easily understand why a holy priest used to say: "No matter how great the graces I ask of God for myself or others, as often as I celebrate Mass, they are nothing compared to the offering I make Him." He, indeed, reasoned justly when he added: "All the favours that I ask of God, when celebrating Holy Mass, are created and finite things, whereas the gifts I offer to Him are uncreated and infinite, and so to balance the account I become the creditor and He the debtor." This good priest by no means wished to deny that the power of offering the gift as well as the gift itself came first from God; but putting it thus, he asked great graces in the Holy Sacrifice, and received still greater.

And you, why do you not realise all this? Why is it you do not ask great

graces at this favourable time? I earnestly advise and exhort you to ask God in every Mass, the grace to become a saint. Do you think I advise you to ask too much? Well, I tell you it is not too much. Has not our good and loving Master promised us in the Gospel that for a cup of cold water, given in His name, He will bestow the kingdom of heaven? How then can He refuse us a hundred heavens, were there so many, in return for the Blood of His beloved Son, offered to Him on the altar?

How can you, therefore, doubt that He will give you every virtue, and all the perfection required to make you a saint, and a great saint in heaven? O blessed Mass! Let your heart's desires be then multiplied a thousand-fold, and ask as much as you will; remembering always that you are asking of God, Who cannot grow poor by giving, and, therefore, the more you ask, the more will He give you.

### 6.—In Holy Mass we Receive even Graces which we do not Ask,

XVI. But will you believe it? besides the graces we ask in Holy Mass, the good God grants many others which we do not ask. S. Jerome teaches this truth: "Without doubt, says the Holy Doctor, the Lord

grants all the favours which are asked of Him in Mass; and what is still more wonderful, He oftentimes grants that also which is not demanded;"* so that we, on our part, put no obstacle in the way. It can, then, be truly said, that Holy Mass is the spiritual Sun of the human race, which shines on the good and bad; nor is there a soul on earth, however wicked, who, hearing Mass, does not carry away some blessing from God, though he has not asked, nor even thought of it at the time.

This is what happened to two wicked young men, as related by St. Antonine, Archbishop of Florence. They both went out one day into a forest to hunt: one of them had heard Mass the same morning, the other not. Whilst they were on their way, there arose a furious storm, and in the midst of the thunder and lightning they heard a voice which cried out: "Strike, strike." As they continued to go along trembling with fear, the one who had not heard Mass was struck by a flash of lightning and immediately reduced to ashes. The other, beside himself with terror, knew not where to turn his steps for shelter, when he heard the same voice again repeating,

* *S. Hier. Cap. Cum. Mart. De Celebr. Missæ.*

" Strike, strike." The unfortunate wretch dreaded his last moment had come, when he heard another voice which answered: "I cannot strike; for to-day he has heard '*The Word was made flesh.*'" Then, he understood it was the Mass he had heard that morning which saved him from such a terrible death. O how often has not God preserved you from death, or at least, great dangers on account of the Holy Mass you have heard! St. Gregory the Great assures us of this in his Fourth Dialogue: "By the hearing of Holy Mass," says the Holy Doctor, "it is absolutely certain, man is delivered from many evils and dangers both foreseen and unforeseen." And St. Augustine tells us that,* "A man who hears Mass devoutly, shall be preserved from a sudden death, which is the most terrible punishment inflicted by Divine Justice on sinners." Behold, then, an admirable preservative, according to this holy Bishop, against the danger of a sudden death: "Hear Mass every day, and hear it with all possible devotion." He who makes use of such a powerful safeguard, may be certain that this dreadful misfortune of a sudden death shall not befall him.

* *Can. Quia passus, De Consecr.* Dist. 2.

There is a singular opinion, which some have attributed to St. Augustine, that, whilst a person assists at Mass, he does not become older, but maintains the same degree of strength and vigour that he had at the beginning of the Divine Sacrifice. I do not care to know whether this be true or not; but, I say, that if he who assists at Mass grow older in body, he does not grow older in evil; for, as St. Gregory says: "A virtuous man who attends Mass, is preserved in the way of righteousness."* He increases constantly in merits and grace, and he acquires, every day, new virtues which render him more and more agreeable to God.

St. Bernard is emphatic on this truth: "More is gained," he says, "by one single Mass than by distributing all your goods to the poor, or going on pilgrimages to all the most holy shrines in the world."† O boundless riches of Holy Mass! Let this truth sink deeply into your heart. By hearing or celebrating Holy Mass, considering it in itself, and in its intrinsic worth, you gain more merit before God, than by giving all your goods to the poor, or by going as a pilgrim through the entire world,

* *De Sacr. Miss. apud Bern. De Bustis.*
† *De Sacr. Miss. ap. Bern. De Bust.* p. 2. Ser. 3.

or visiting with the utmost devotion the famous sanctuaries of Rome, of Compostella, of Loreto, Jerusalem, and all others throughout the universe. This grand truth clearly follows from the doctrine laid down by St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, who says: "In each Mass are contained all the fruits, and all the graces, yea, all those immense treasures which the Son of God poured out so abundantly upon the Church, His Spouse, by the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross." * Now, pause a while, close this book, read no further at present, but sum up in your mind all the wonderful blessings of Holy Mass: weigh them well in silence: and then you shall find no difficulty in believing that one Mass—viewed in its own intrinsic worth and value—is of such efficacy, that, according to the Doctors of the Church, it might have sufficed to obtain the salvation of the whole human race? Let us suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ had not suffered at all on Calvary, and that instead of the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross, He had solely instituted the Mass for our Redemption, and with an express precept that it should be celebrated only *once* in the entire world. Well, now, had

* *De Consecr.* Dist. 2.

God been pleased to act thus, that single Mass, celebrated by the poorest priest on earth, would suffice—considered in its intrinsic value—to obtain the salvation of all men. Yes, one single Mass—taking the case we have supposed—would be sufficient to convert all the Mahometans, infidels, schismatics, heretics, and bad Christians throughout the world. At the same time, it would close the gates of hell, and empty Purgatory of all the souls suffering therein.

But, alas! we, unhappy creatures, thoughtless children of Adam, by our tepidity, want of devotion, and perhaps by our sins and iniquities committed during Mass, we narrow its unbounded extent, and we render its infinite treasures of no value. Would that I could ascend to the summits of the highest mountains, and there cry aloud, so that the whole world might hear me: O foolish people, wretched inhabitants of the earth, what are you doing? Why do you not run to the Churches to assist at every Mass celebrated therein? Why not imitate the holy Angels who, according to St. Chrysostom, descend in legions during Holy Mass, and bow down in lowly adoration before the altar, covered with the wings of reverence and holy awe, they wait there during the time of the august Sacrifice, in

order to intercede more efficaciously for us, well knowing that this is the most fitting time, the very moment we require, to obtain every blessing from heaven. Are you not now filled with shame and confusion, when you remember how little value you have hitherto set on Holy Mass? But what shall I say of you, if you are one of those who have said: "A Mass more, or a Mass less, is of little importance!"

### 7.—Holy Mass Assists the Souls in Purgatory.

XVII. And before concluding this instruction, let me remind you, that it was not by mere accident I said, that one single Mass, as far as its intrinsic value is concerned, is sufficient to empty Purgatory of all the souls who are being purified therein, and to lead them to the bosom of God in Paradise. For, the Mass not only aids these Holy Souls, as a sacrifice of *propitiation*, in offering to God an adequate satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to their sins, but it also avails them as a Sacrifice of *impetration*, by which they can obtain their entire deliverance from Purgatory.* Hence the custom of Holy Church, which not only offers the Mass for the Souls in

* De Lug. S. 6. n. 158.

Purgatory, but prays for their entire deliverance. In order, then, that you may be excited to compassion for these Holy Souls, hear what St. Gregory the Great teaches in his Dialogues, about these dreadful fires: "The flames of Purgatory," says the Holy Doctor, "are the instrument of Divine Justice, operating with such terrible power as to render the agony of the souls therein detained insufferable." "These pains," continues the Saint, "far exceed all the tribulations or martyrdoms that can be witnessed, felt, or even imagined in this life." But still more excruciating than all this is the *pain of loss;* because being deprived of the beautiful vision of God, "They," as the Angelic Doctor says,* "experience an indescribable agony and a fierce and burning thirst to behold the Supreme Good, all which is denied to their unceasing yearnings." Here, now, enter into your own heart and realise the following truth—If you were to see at any time your father and mother on the point of being drowned, and if you could save them by merely stretching out your hand, would you not feel yourself bound by the law of charity and of justice to stretch forth that

* Dist. 12. Art. 1.

hand to rescue them? How then can you behold with the eyes of faith, so many poor souls, perhaps your nearest and dearest friends, in a sea of fire, and yet remain so heartless as not to endure the trifling inconvenience of assisting with devotion at one Mass for their release, or the alleviation of their agonies? What an unfeeling heart is yours! Surely you cannot doubt, but that even a single Mass can bring exceeding great comfort to these poor souls. In order to convince you of this, I have only to cite the authority of St. Jerome. He teaches clearly, that when Mass is being celebrated for a soul in Purgatory, this fire, otherwise so devouring, suspends its action, and the soul ceases to suffer during the whole time of the celebration of the Divine Sacrifice.* The Holy Doctor adds, that at each Mass which is celebrated many souls are delivered from Purgatory and wing their way to heaven.†

Examples without end prove that this charity or holy compassion for the suffering souls will redound to your own welfare.

* "Animæ quæ sunt in Purgatorio, pro quibus solet sacerdos in Missa orare, interim nullum tormentum sentiunt dum Missa celebratur."

† "Missa celebrata, plures animæ exeunt de Purgatorio."—S. Hier. C. Cum. Mart. Infra de Celebr. Miss.

but I will confine myself to one, well authenticated, in the life of St. Peter Damien. This holy servant of God, left an orphan at a tender age, was taken into the house of one of his brothers who treated him cruelly, making him go barefoot and in rags, and causing him to endure the privations and sufferings of a mendicant. It happened that one day the poor boy found a small sum of money on the road. He seemed to himself to have found a treasure. But how was he to spend it? His miserable state—so poor and so friendless—suggested many ways; but after thinking the matter over and over again, he finally resolved to give it to a priest to celebrate Mass for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. From that time forward his fortune was changed. He was adopted by another brother of an amiable disposition, who took him into his house, treated him as his own child, clothed him, and sent him to school, whence he came forth a great man, and a great saint, an ornament to the College of Cardinals, and one of the most illustrious pillars of the Church.

Now, you see how from one single Mass, obtained at a slight personal inconvenience, all the happiness of this great Saint and Doctor of the Church, had its origin. O

most holy Mass! which at the same time assists the living and the dead! O most holy Sacrifice, replete with blessings for time and for eternity! You must also bear in mind that the souls in Purgatory are so grateful that when once in heaven, they never cease to intercede for their benefactors until they see them in eternal glory.

We have a signal proof of this, in the life of a wicked woman of Rome. This unhappy creature led a scandalous life for many years. During this time, she had no other end in view than to indulge her wicked passions and to corrupt the youth of the city. The only good she did at this period of her life, was to have Mass offered very often, for the suffering souls in Purgatory. This, as we may piously believe, was the cause of her conversion; for one day she felt such a sincere sorrow for her sins, that she fled from her wicked companions, cast herself at the feet of a holy and zealous priest, and made a general confession of her whole life. A short time afterwards she died with such sentiments of piety and contrition, that she gave most certain signs of her eternal salvation. This marvellous conversion, and thrice-happy death, were justly attributed to the merits of the Masses which

she had offered for the Holy Souls. Let us then rise out of our torpor, lest *we allow Publicans and sinners to go before us into the Kingdom of Heaven.* (Matt. xxi. 31).

XVIII. If, however, you are one of those hard-hearted misers, who are so sunk in avarice, that you not only fail in charity to your deceased friends, by neglecting to pray for them, or to hear Mass for the repose of their souls; but what is still worse, that, trampling on every dictate of right and justice, you refuse to pay the pious legacies bequeathed by your ancestors for Masses; Oh, then, inflamed with all the thunders of God's wrath, I say to your face: "You are worse than the devils themselves, yea, infinitely worse, since the demons torture only the reprobate, whereas you torment God's elect. No, for you there is neither confession that avails, nor absolution that is valid, nor confessor who can absolve, unless you sincerely repent of such a dreadful crime, and satisfy to the last farthing all your obligations to the Holy Souls." But you may say to me: "Father, I cannot, I have not the means." What, you cannot, indeed? And yet, you have means for your luxury and folly; you have means for parties of pleasure, for balls, for your country-houses, and even, perhaps, for the dens of vice. But to satisfy your obliga-

tions to the living, and still more to the poor souls departed, you have no means, you cannot? Oh, what a shame! But I now understand you thoroughly: you think because there is no one on earth to oblige you, therefore, there is no necessity to pay these debts; but you forget that you must render an account of them to God. Continue, then, to devour the goods of the dead; appropriate to yourself their pious bequests; but know, that the Divine Oracles have threatened you with a terrible retribution of misfortunes, sickness, worldly reverses, appalling calamities and irreparable ruin in your property, life and honour. It is the word of God and cannot fail: "*They eat the Sacrifices of the dead . . . and destruction was multiplied amongst them.*" (Ps. cv. 28, 29.) Yes, ruin, disgrace and woes without remedy shall fall on those who do not fulfil their obligations to the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

The Council of Carthage very justly declared those ungrateful wretches excommunicated, as being guilty of the murder of their neighbours; and the Council of Valence ordered that they should be expelled from the Church as Infidels.

However, this is not the severest punishment which God inflicts on those who have no pity on their departed friends; Oh, no!

far more terrible evils await them in the next life. St. James assures us of this, for he says, the Lord will judge without mercy those who have not shown mercy to others. "*Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.*" He will allow them to be paid in the same coin by their own heirs; that is, their last wishes shall not be fulfilled; neither shall the Masses which they have left in their wills be celebrated, or if celebrated, God will not accept them for their souls, but will apply them to other suffering souls, who, during life had compassion on the faithful departed. We read a striking example of this in the Chronicles of our Seraphic Order. A Friar appeared after his death to one of his companions, and manifested to him the bitter torments he was enduring in Purgatory, especially on account of his negligence in praying for his departed brethren. He also said, that all that had been done on his behalf up to that time, and even the Masses offered for his soul, had been of no avail to him; for God, in punishment of his neglect, had applied them to other souls, who, whilst on earth, had compassion on their departed brethren.*

*Chron. Frat. Min. p. 3.

XIX. Before concluding this present chapter, permit me, on bended knees, and with hands joined, to implore you who read this little book not to close it until you have made a firm resolution of henceforth employing all possible diligence in assisting at Mass, and of having as many Masses to be celebrated as your means permit, not only for the souls in Purgatory, but also for your own soul, and the souls of your friends and benefactors. Two motives ought induce you to do this: first, that you may obtain the blessing of a holy death, for it is the opinion of holy and learned divines that there is no more powerful or efficacious means than Holy Mass to obtain this greatest of all graces. St. Mechtilde is said* to have heard from our beloved Lord Himself, that whoever during life has been accustomed to hear Mass devoutly, shall in death be consoled by the presence of the Angels and Saints and his advocates, who shall safely defend him from all the assaults of the infernal fiends. O what a happy and holy death shall you have, if during life you shall have endeavoured to hear Mass as often as possible!

The second motive is, that you yourself

*Lib. 3. Grat. Spir. c. 27.

may obtain a speedy release from Purgatory, and wing your way to eternal glory, since there is no surer means of receiving from God this great grace of going direct to heaven, or at least, of a short Purgatory, than Indulgences and the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Popes have drawn largely on the treasures of the Church to aid the Holy Souls by the many Indulgences they have granted for them. And as to the efficacy of the Holy Mass, in hastening their deliverance from Purgatory, this is sufficiently proved in what I have already said. But, if you need anything more on this subject, the example and the authority of the great servant of God, John of Avila, the oracle of Spain, ought to suffice. Being asked in his last hours, on his death-bed, what he most earnestly wished to be done for him after death, he answered, "Masses! Masses! Masses!"

And now before closing this subject, allow me to give you a counsel of great moment. Try to get all the Masses which you would wish to have celebrated for you after your death, offered now whilst you have life and strength. Do not trust to those who may survive you for the fulfilment of this duty. I am the more anxious

to impress this on you, as St. Anselm holds that one Mass, heard or celebrated for your soul during life, may be more meritorious than a thousand celebrated after your death.*

This truth was understood well by a wealthy Genoese merchant, who at his death, left nothing for his own soul. Every one was astonished that a man so rich, so pious, and so generous to all, could have been so cruel to himself at the hour of death. But after his burial there was found a record in one of his diaries of what he had done for his soul during life. I here copy some of the entries: "Masses celebrated for my soul, two thousand lire; for the marriage of poor girls, ten thousand; for such and such a holy sanctuary, two hundred;" and so on. At the end of this book he wrote: "He who wishes to do good, let him do it during life; nor trust to those who may survive him." A very trite old proverb teaches us "That a taper before gives more light than a torch behind." Profit by this edifying example, and weigh seriously the excellence and advantages of Holy Mass, and you will henceforth be astonished at the blindness in which you

* *Apud Castell. diur. Sac. Præp.*

have lived till now, having disregarded a treasure so great, so immense, and which was, indeed, for you a "Hidden Treasure."

Now, therefore, that you know its value, banish from your mind, and still more from your tongue, such scandalous expressions: "A Mass more or less, what does it matter?—It is quite enough to hear Mass on days of obligation—The Mass of that Priest is as long as one in Holy Week—I rush out of the Church when I see him at the Altar." Renew, also, your resolution to hear, henceforward, as many Masses as you can, and to assist at them with all possible devotion. And, in order you may be enabled to do so, make use of the practical and devout method which follows; and may God bless you.

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# CHAPTER II.

## METHODS OF HEARING MASS.

### § I.

### GENERAL DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH WE OUGHT TO HEAR MASS.

I. As we have already stated, in the preceding instruction, it was the opinion of St. John Chrysostom,* and this opinion was approved and confirmed by St. Gregory the Great, in his fourth dialogue, that while Holy Mass is being celebrated, innumerable bands of Angels descend from their heavenly mansions to assist at the Divine Sacrifice. St. Nile, Abbot, and disciple of St. John Chrysostom, assures us that while the holy Doctor was celebrating, he saw a great multitude of those heavenly spirits surrounding the altar, and assisting the sacred ministers in their holy functions. This being so, behold, now, the most necessary disposition for assisting with fruit at Holy Mass. Go to the church as if you were going to Calvary, and keep yourself in the presence of the altar, as you

* *Homil. 3. Incomp. De Nat.*

would before the throne of God in company with His holy angels. See, then, what ought to be your modesty, your respect, and your attention, if you wish to derive the fruit and the blessings which God is wont to pour out on those who assist at the sacred mysteries with sentiments of piety and reverence.

II. We read in the Old Law, that while the Jews were offering their sacrifices, in which were immolated only bulls, lambs and other animals, it was a sight worthy of admiration to behold with what earnestness, respect, and silence, all the people assisted thereat. And, although the number of persons was innumerable, besides seven hundred ministers of the sacrifices, yet it seemed as if the temple were empty; not the least noise, not even a whisper was heard from that vast multitude. Now, if such respect and veneration were shown to these sacrifices, which were only shadows and mere figures of ours, what respect, what devotion, what religious silence does not Holy Mass require, in which the Immaculate Lamb Himself, the Incarnate Word, is offered for us in sacrifice. This truth was perfectly understood by the glorious St. Ambrose, who, as Cesarius relates, was accustomed whilst celebrating

the Divine Mysteries, to turn to the people after the gospel, and exhort them to a rigorous silence; by which he understood not only that they put a bridle to their tongue, but that they took care not to make the least noise by coughing, moving, or any other sort of sound. His orders were strictly obeyed, and all those who assisted at his Mass felt themselves seized with a holy fear, and were so interiorly moved by divine grace that they derived great fruit and an increase of every spiritual blessing.

## § II.

### SEVERAL METHODS OF HEARING HOLY MASS.

#### First and Second Methods.

III. The aim of this little book is to enlighten every one who may read it, on the merits and excellence of the Most Holy Sacrifice, and to excite them to practise the method of hearing Mass that I am going to prescribe. As, however, the different methods of hearing Mass, which are found in books of piety, are most devout and salutary,—this we see in the number of prayer books published for the use of the faithful,—I do not by any means wish to interfere with the choice of any one; on

the contrary, I wish everyone to select that which most agrees with his natural inclinations and devotion. I shall merely act the part of an angel-guardian, by suggesting what is most profitable; namely, the method which, in my humble opinion, shall be the most useful to the greatest number, and the easiest for all to put in practice. With this end in view, I shall divide the subject into three classes, or three general methods.

IV. The first method of hearing Mass is used by those who, with their prayer book in hand, follow all the actions of the Priest, and recite at each of them some vocal prayer from their book, and thus they pass the whole time of Mass reading. This, assuredly, is a most excellent method of assisting at Holy Mass, and if united with a serious consideration on the sacred mysteries, it is a source of great spiritual profit for the soul. But, as it involves a constant strain on the mind,—for it requires them to attend to each of the ceremonies performed by the Priest, and then to turn their eyes on the book, in order to read the prayer corresponding to the mystery,—it becomes very wearisome in practice, and few persevere in this method, or continue long to use it. This happens through the weak-

ness of our mind, which is easily fatigued when obliged to reflect on each of the many actions performed by the Priest during Holy Mass. Let those, however, who find it good for them, and who derive spiritual profit from it, continue to practise it; as God will not allow such a painful application of the mind and senses to be deprived of its befitting reward.

V. The second method of hearing Holy Mass is that employed by those who use no book, but who fix their mind, enlightened by faith, on Jesus crucified, and leaning against the Cross, gather from it fruits of sweet contemplation. They pass the whole time of Mass in interior recollection, devoutly meditating on our Lord's Passion, which is not only represented, but mystically renewed in this Most Holy Sacrifice. It is certain that those who thus concentrate their mental faculties in God, are enabled to exercise heroic acts of faith, hope, charity, and other virtues. This mode of hearing Mass is assuredly more profitable than the first, as well as more sweet and attractive. A good lay-brother who experienced this used to say, that in hearing Mass he read only three letters. The first was *black*; that is, the consideration of his sins, which excited in him

sorrow and repentance, and this he meditated on from the beginning of Mass to the Offertory. The second letter was *red;* that is, the meditation on the Passion of our Lord, contemplating the most precious Blood which Jesus shed for us on Calvary, when He endured a death so cruel, and in this he occupied his mind till the Communion. The third letter was *white*, that is, Spiritual Communion, because during the Priest's Communion, he united himself with Jesus Christ in the Sacrament, making a spiritual Communion. He then remained absorbed in God, until the end of Mass, contemplating the glory for which he hoped as the fruit of this Divine Sacrifice. This humble, simple soul, thus heard Mass with the greatest perfection; and would that all might learn from him such sublime wisdom.

## § III.

### THIRD METHOD OF HEARING MASS.

VI. The third method of hearing Holy Mass with fruit, consists of a middle course between the two just mentioned. This last method does not require as many vocal prayers as are used in the first; nor such a sublime spirit of contemplation as

is necessary for the second; but, if you consider the matter well, you shall find that this third method is more in accordance with the spirit of the Church, which invites us to unite our intention with that of the Celebrant, who is obliged to offer up the Most Holy Sacrifice for the four ends mentioned in the preceding chapter. Now, since you yourself exercise, in a certain manner, the office of priest, when you assist at Holy Mass, you ought to apply yourself, as much as possible, to the consideration of these four duties. This may be easily accomplished if you but make the four offerings which we shall now explain. The better to put this method in practice, carry for some time with you this little book, till you have learned by heart the offerings here indicated; or, at least, till you have become well imbued with their sense, for it is not necessary to confine yourself to the mere words.

In order that you may hear Mass with all possible respect and devotion, at the beginning of the Holy Sacrifice, whilst the Priest is humbling himself at the foot of the Altar reciting the *Confiteor*, briefly examine your conscience and form in your heart an act of true contrition, and imploring the assistance of the Holy Ghost,

ask pardon of God for all your sins. Then divide the Mass into four parts, the better to acquit yourself of the four great debts you owe to God. The method is as follows:

VII. In the first part, which is from the beginning of Mass to the Gospel, you will strive to acquit yourself of the first debt, which consists in adoring and praising the Majesty of God, Who is worthy of infinite honour and praise. Wherefore humble yourself with Jesus, and descending into the depth of your own nothingness, humbly acknowledge it in the sight of His infinite Majesty, and deeply penetrated with the sense of your unworthiness, say to Him: "O my God, I adore Thee and acknowledge Thee for my Lord and for the Master of my soul: I protest that all I am and have are from Thee. And since Thy supreme Majesty deserves infinite honour and homage, while I am a poor miserable creature, utterly incapable of paying so great a debt, I offer up to Thee the humiliation and the homage which Jesus renders to Thee on Thy Altar. That which Jesus does, I desire also to do; I humble and abase myself with Him before Thy Majesty. I adore Thee with the same sentiments of humiliation with which Jesus adores Thee.

I rejoice with all my heart, in thinking of the infinite submission which this Divine Saviour undergoes for me."

Then, close the book, and continue interiorly the same acts, rejoicing to think that God is thus infinitely honoured, and repeat over and over again: "Yes, my God I delight in the infinite honour which results to Thy Majesty from this Most Holy Sacrifice; I rejoice exceedingly in it, and I experience a satisfaction and happiness greater than I can express." It is not at all necessary that you should repeat these prayers word for word. You may freely use whatever words your devotion will suggest. Above all, be profoundly recollected and united to God, and you will thus have paid, to the last farthing, your first debt towards His infinite Majesty.

VIII. In the second part, that is, from the Gospel to the Elevation, you will discharge your second debt. Casting a glance over your most grievous sins and recognising the immense debt which you have contracted towards the Divine Justice, say with sentiments of profound humility:

"Behold, my God, this traitor who has so many times rebelled against Thee.

Alas! pierced with grief, I abhor and detest with all my heart my innumerable sins; I offer in atonement for them the same satisfaction which Jesus offers on the altar. I offer to Thee all the merits of Jesus, the Blood of Jesus, His whole self, God and Man at the same time, Who in quality of victim deigns still to renew His Sacrifice in my favour. And since He becomes, on this altar, my Mediator and Advocate, imploring Thee to pardon me through His Most Precious Blood, I unite my voice with that of His Adorable Blood, and I implore Thy mercy for so many enormous sins which I have committed. The Blood of Jesus cries for mercy, and my heart, pierced with sorrow, cries also for mercy. O God of my heart! if my tears move Thee not, let the groans of my Jesus move Thee. Why should He not obtain for me the same mercy which He obtained for the whole human race on the Cross! Yes, my God! I hope that in virtue of this most Precious Blood, Thou wilt pardon all my iniquities; and I will continue to deplore them to the last breath of my life."

Then shutting the book, repeat these acts of a true and a lively sorrow for your sins, and giving full scope to the affections of your heart, say from your inmost soul:

"O dearest Jesus! give me the tears of St. Peter, the contrition of St. Mary Magdalen, and the grief of all the Saints, who, from sinners became true penitents, in order, that by the merits of this Holy Sacrifice I may obtain the entire pardon of all my sins."

Make many acts of this sort, keeping yourself in profound recollection, and be assured that in this way you will fully discharge the debt entailed by your many grievous sins.

IX. In the third part of the Mass, that is, from the Elevation to the Communion, recall to mind the great and manifold blessings received from God, offer to Him, in return, a victim of infinite value, namely, the Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ; and invite all the Angels and Saints of Heaven to unite with you in thanking God in the following or similar words:

"Behold me, O dearest Lord, here crushed down under the weight of the general and particular benefits which Thou deignest to lavish on me, and which Thou art still disposed to bestow on me in time and eternity. Thy mercies towards me are, indeed, infinite; yet I am ready to pay Thee all even to the last farthing. In return for all that I owe Thee, I present to Thee, by the hands

of the priest, this most adorable Body, this most Precious Blood, this innocent Victim. I am sure that this offering is sufficient to repay all the gifts which Thou hast bestowed on me. This gift of infinite value is alone worth all the gifts which I have hitherto received, which I continue to receive at each moment, and which I am yet to receive from Thee.

"Angels of God, and all ye blessed inhabitants of heaven, help me to thank my God, and to offer Him in thanksgiving for so many benefits, not only this, but all the Masses which are actually being celebrated throughout the whole world; in order that I may thus make a full return for all the graces which He has bestowed on me, for those which He at present bestows, and for all those which He will bestow on me for endless ages. Amen."

With what a sweet complacency will this God of goodness receive these marks of such affectionate gratitude. Oh, how pleased He will be with this offering, which, being of infinite value, is worth more than the entire world. And, in order to excite more and more these pious sentiments in your heart, invite all Heaven to thank God for you; invoke all those Saints to whom you feel a particular de-

votion, and say to them in the fulness of your heart :

"O you my holy patrons, return thanks to the goodness of my God, so that I may not live and die in ingratitude. Beseech Him to accept my good will, and to have regard to the loving thanks which my Jesus offers to Him for me in Thy most Holy Sacrifice."

Continue in these pious sentiments and frequently repeat this prayer; and be assured that in this manner you will fully acquit yourself of the infinite thanks due to God for all His benefits. You will do well to recite every day, for this end, the "Morning Offering" which can be found at the end of this little book, in order to offer to God not only your daily actions, but also all the Masses celebrated in the entire world.

X. In the fourth part of Mass, from the Communion to the end, while the priest communicates sacramentally, make a Spiritual Communion in the manner which will be explained at the end of this chapter; keep your thoughts fixed on God Who is now spiritually within you; ask of Him with a lively faith all the graces of which you stand in need; for it is at this moment that Jesus gives Himself to you, and it is

He Who prays and supplicates for you. Enlarge your heart then, and put no limit to your desires, but ask of God the greatest graces, since the offering of His Divine Son which you have just made to Him is of infinite price. Say to Him with a profound humility:

"I know, O my God, that I am unworthy of Thy favours: I sincerely confess my extreme unworthiness; I deserve not to be heard on account of the multitude and enormity of my sins. But canst Thou reject the prayer which Thy Divine Son addresses to Thee from this altar, on which He offers to Thee, in my behalf, His Life and His Blood. Accept, O my God, the prayer of Him Who pleads in my favour before Thy adorable Majesty; and for His sake, grant me all the graces which Thou knowest to be necessary for me to succeed in the great affair of my salvation. Now, more than ever, am I emboldened to ask of Thee a general pardon of my sins, and the grace of final perseverance. Trusting, moreover, in the merits and intercession of my Jesus, I ask of Thee, my God, all the virtues necessary for me, and efficacious means of becoming a Saint. I ask of Thee, besides, the conversion of unbelievers, of all sinners, and especially of those with

whom I am united by the ties of blood or friendship. I also implore Thee to grant the liberation, not of one soul only, but of all the souls actually detained in Purgatory. Deliver them all in virtue of this most Holy Sacrifice, that they may no longer remain in that place of torment and expiation. Convert all sinners, in order that this miserable world may become a Paradise of delights for Thy Sacred Heart, and that, after having loved, praised, blessed and adored Thee in time, we may praise and glorify Thee for all eternity in heaven. Amen."

Ask with confidence; ask for yourself, your friends and neighbours; ask assistance in all your necessities, both temporal and spiritual; ask also in behalf of Holy Church, the fulness of all good, and relief from all evils.

Do not ask for any of these things with indifference, but rather with a great confidence, being convinced, that your prayers, united with those of Jesus, will be heard.

After Mass make an act of thanksgiving in these words of the Church: "We give Thee thanks, almighty God, for all Thy benefits, who liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen." Leave the Church

in a spirit of compunction as if you were returning from Calvary.

Now tell me, if all the Masses at which you have assisted up to the present, had been heard by you in this manner, with how many graces would you not have enriched your soul? Ah, what a loss have you not suffered in assisting at so great a Sacrifice with so little piety, looking about, and observing who was coming in, or going out; sometimes even talking, and permitting yourself to be overcome by drowsiness, or, at most, in muttering some vocal prayer without attention or recollection. Take, then, the resolution of embracing this pleasing and easy method of hearing Mass with profit and devotion. Rest assured that by this means your soul will be enriched with singular graces and benedictions; you will conceive a higher esteem for the august Sacrifice of the Mass, and never again will it occur to you to think or say that, "A Mass more or less is of no consequence."

## § IV.

### ON SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

XI. We have already said that every one who assists at Mass, and who is precluded from receiving sacramentally, ought not to fail to communicate spiritually, at the moment the Priest receives the Sacred Body and Blood of our Lord. It ought, however, to be remembered that, according to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, there are three ways of communicating: the first, *only* sacramentally, the second, spiritually, and the third, both sacramentally and spiritually. We do not speak here of the first, which is that of those who communicate in the state of mortal sin, as did the traitor Judas; nor of the third, which is common to all those who receive sacramentally the Holy Eucharist in the state of grace; we speak only of the second, which, as the same Council says, is for those, "Who not being able to receive sacramentally the Body of the Lord, receive Him spiritually, with acts of a lively *faith that worketh by charity*, and with a longing desire of uniting themselves to the Supreme Good, they thus render themselves capable of receiving the fruit of this

Divine Sacrament."* According to this doctrine, those who cannot receive the Holy Eucharist *really*, receive it *spiritually*, by making those acts of faith and charity, with an ardent desire of uniting their hearts to Jesus Christ in His Sacrament of love.

To facilitate a practice so advantageous, ponder seriously what I am going to say:—When the Priest is on the point of receiving, place yourself in the most respectful posture possible, and with profound recollection make with all your heart an act of contrition; then humbly striking your breast, to show that you acknowledge yourself unworthy of such a grace, recite the acts of love, offering, humility, etc., which you are accustomed to perform when you sacramentally approach the Holy Table. Add to this the most ardent desire of receiving Jesus Christ, Who, for your sake, deigns to hide Himself under the veil of the sacramental species, and, in order to re-animate your devotion, imagine that the Blessed Virgin, or some one of your patron Saints, comes to present you with the Sacred Host; fancy that you receive it *really*, and holding Jesus closely

* Con. Trid. Sess. 43. Cap. 8.

clasped to your heart, repeat, again and again, these words: "Come, my Jesus, the love and life of my soul! Come into this poor heart; come, and satiate my desires; come and sanctify my soul; come, O most sweet Jesus, come!" After this remain silent; contemplate your God within your heart; and, as if you had really received Him, adore Him, give Him thanks, and perform all the other ordinary acts after Communion.

Be fully assured that this spiritual Communion, so neglected by Christians in our days, is nevertheless a real treasure which replenishes the soul with innumerable blessings. According to several authors, and among others, Father Rodriguez, it is so useful, that it may produce the same graces as Sacramental Communion, and even greater: for, although Sacramental Communion of its own nature produces greater fruit, because being a Sacrament it operates by its own nature, yet a soul desirous of its perfection may make a Spiritual Communion with so much humility, love, and devotion, as to merit a greater grace than is granted one who communicates sacramentally, but with less fervour and preparation. This way of communicating is so pleasing to our Lord that very often He

has deigned to hearken to the pious desires of His servants by giving Himself sacramentally to them. This happened to the Blessed Clare of Montefalco, to St. Catherine of Sienna, and to St. Lidwina. At other times, He gave Himself to them through the ministry of Angels, as we read in the lives of St. Bonaventure and of two holy Bishops, Honoratus and Firminus; and again by the most holy Mother of God who deigned to give Holy Communion with her own hands to St. Sylvester. These touching examples of God's holy love will not astonish you, if you consider that Spiritual Communion inflames the soul with holy fervour, unites it intimately to God, and disposes it for receiving His most signal favours. Can it be possible, then, that so many advantages should make no impression on you, and that you would always remain so cold and insensible?

What excuse will you henceforth be able to make, if you neglect a practice so holy and so useful? Make, then, the resolution of frequently availing yourself of it; and as an inducement to be faithful to it, remember that Spiritual Communion has this advantage over Sacramental Communion, that this latter can be made only once in twenty-four hours, whilst the former can be

made not only at every Mass, but at any time of the day, morning, evening, or night, in church or in your room, and even without your spiritual director's permission. In a word, as often as you will do what I have just now said, you may make a Spiritual Communion, and thus enrich your souls with graces, merits, and all kinds of spiritual blessings. Oh, how many souls have, by this salutary practice, often repeated in the course of the day, arrived at the highest degree of sanctity.

This is the only end I had in view in writing this little book, that is, to inspire all those who read it with a holy desire to introduce into the whole Church the practice of hearing Mass every day with solid piety and true devotion, and of making each time a Spiritual Communion. Oh, what happiness for the faithful if this end be obtained! We should then see the holy fervour of the Primitive Church flourishing in our midst; for, in the golden age of the Apostles, we read that the faithful received Holy Communion every day whilst assisting at Holy Mass. If you are not worthy to receive your God so often, at least, assist every day at Holy Mass, and each time make a Spiritual Communion. If I succeed in persuading you, who read these pages,

to practise this devotion, I will regard my time and labour in writing them well employed. But, in order to remove all the excuses that are wont to be adduced by some persons for not hearing daily Mass, I shall give, in the following chapter, several examples from every condition of life, which shall prove that those who thus deprive themselves of such a blessing by their own fault, are preparing bitter regrets and remorse for the hour of death.

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## CHAPTER III.

### EXAMPLES TO INDUCE ALL THE FAITHFUL OF EVERY STATE IN LIFE, TO HEAR DAILY MASS.

THOSE who absent themselves from daily Mass are wont to adduce many specious reasons to excuse their tepidity and want of love for the Most Holy Sacrifice. Such persons are solely devoted to their business and worldly pursuits, and intent alone on the sordid interests of this world. For these they will endure every fatigue and bear every privation; but when there is question of being present at Mass,—which is assuredly the most important business of their lives,—they are not only heedless and indifferent, but they have a hundred frivolous pretexts to prevent them, such as weak health, family troubles, pressing business, and so on. If Holy Church did not oblige such persons under pain of mortal sin to attend Mass, at least, on Sundays and Holidays, I am quite sure, they would never visit a church or bend a knee before the altar. O shame and folly of our days! How we have fallen away from the fervour of the early Christians, who, as we have

already related, assisted every day at the Holy Sacrifice, and nourished their souls every morning with the Bread of Angels, communicating sacramentally. And yet, they had their business and worldly affairs to attend to; but they knew that by this means they more effectually fulfilled them, and thus promoted their spiritual and temporal interests by assisting at daily Mass. O blind world, when will you open your eyes to recognise your folly? But, you Christian souls, who read these pages, awaken from this sleep of death! Let this henceforth be your most cherished, your most constant devotion—to hear Mass every day, and during its celebration to make a Spiritual Communion. And to move you more effectually to do this I know no more powerful means than the examples of your fellow-man. For it is a trite and old maxim, "We all live by example;" and everything is easy when we see it practised by our own equals and acquaintances. "What," said St. Augustine, rebuking his own cowardice, "cannot you do what others like you have done?" Hence, we shall relate several examples from all classes of persons, that thus we may induce the whole world to practise this holy and salutary devotion of assisting at daily Mass.

EXAMPLES OF EMPERORS, KINGS, AND QUEENS.

The piety of those in authority, or in high station, has more influence on us than that of private individuals, no matter how edifying that may be ; for nothing is more true than the maxim : " Every one follows the example of the court." And what a long list of examples might I not adduce to animate my readers to walk in the footsteps of those great ones of the earth, by assisting daily at the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ? Let us content ourselves with a few of them :—Constantine the Great, not only heard Mass every day in his palace, but even in his military expeditions, amid the din of arms and the tumult of the camp, he carried a portable altar that the Divine Sacrifice might be constantly celebrated before him. To this, assuredly, he was indebted for his most signal victories. The Emperor Lothair observed the same holy practice ; for he made it a rule of life, in peace or in war, to hear three Masses every day. The pious King of England, Henry III., in like manner, heard daily three Masses, at which his whole court assisted with the most exemplary devotion. He was most signally rewarded by God, even in this life, as he swayed the sceptre fifty-

six years. But, indeed, it is not necessary to cite the example of the Kings of England in the past, we have only to call to mind the ardent devotion of Queen Maria Clementina, whose loss all Rome has not yet ceased to deplore; and who, as she herself often declared to me, found no greater happiness on earth than in assisting at Holy Mass. She was accustomed to hear many Masses every day; and while engaged at this holy duty, she remained immoveable, without ever enjoying the luxury of cushions or any support whatever. This practice, so devout and so edifying, kindled in her heart such glowing love to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, that every day she was also present at three or four Benedictions. And, oh, how many tears did not this good Queen shed, through a holy hunger for the Bread of Angels:—a hunger so vehement that it made her languish day and night, with a heart ever burning towards this only Object of her love. Yet, God willed that her ardent desires should not be fulfilled. In order to render her love still more heroic, and to make her, as it were, a martyr of love, she was deprived of the consolation of receiving Jesus Christ in His Sacrament of love. I am convinced that her desire of Holy Com-

munion, thus frustrated, hastened her last moments, as may be gathered from the letter she wrote to me before her death. However, if she was deprived of frequent Communion she was not deprived of its merits, since she found in Spiritual Communion that ecstatic love which she was not allowed to enjoy in Sacramental Communion. Not only during Mass, but several times during the day, she renewed her Spiritual Communions with exceeding joy of soul. Does not this example witnessed by ourselves, and admired in our day by all Rome, suffice to answer the vain excuses of those who make such a difficulty of hearing Mass every day, and of making a Spiritual Communion every morning during its celebration? But, if I cannot induce you to follow the example of this good Queen, in earnestly desiring to receive Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament every day, I would, however, ask you to imitate her in working assiduously with your hands for poor churches, as it has been followed in Rome by ladies of every rank. They deem it a very pleasing recreation to prepare with their own hands the altar cloths, hangings, vestments, albs, purificators, corporals, etc., for poor churches. Rome, however, is not the only city where

such pious works are performed; for, I could name a Princess, not living in the city, who, every morning, assists at several Masses, and who keeps her young ladies of the court constantly occupied in those pious works for poor churches. She is thus able to send chests full of corporals, mundatories, altar cloths, and vestments, to missioners and preachers, to be distributed among poor churches, that the most Holy Sacrifice may be offered with befitting cleanliness, decency and splendour.

Behold you, Princes of the world, the sure way to prepare heaven for yourselves. And, now what are you doing, and what do you intend doing for this holy work? Why do you not open your hands, and prove your liberality by bestowing abundant alms on so many churches in your states that are in need of everything necessary for public worship? Do not say the treasury is empty, the taxes are insufficient, and every day the revenue diminishes more and more. I will point out to you a very easy method of providing for the altar of God without prejudice to the State: A horse the less in your stables, a footman the less on your carriage, a butler the less in your country-seat, and lo! you have a large sum

saved for the necessities of your poor churches. What do not wars, standing armies, and political troubles cost? And what will bring a true, durable peace that will save you from all these troubles and expenses? You tell me God alone can do it. Well, what is the most efficacious means to obtain it from God? Assuredly, as we have repeatedly said, the Most Holy Sacrifice. If this be so, hear, then, as many Masses as you can; provide the altar with sacred vestments and precious ornaments worthy of this tremendous mystery of God's love, and you will experience a marvellous proof of God's goodness watching over you and your realms.

Let us conclude this subject with the example of St. Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia, which will bring home this truth more clearly to your hearts:—This holy King was not content with assisting, every day, at several Masses, kneeling on the bare pavement; nor with serving the priest, in person, with the greatest humility, but he also contributed to the altar the most precious jewels of his treasury and the richest embroidery of the royal wardrobes. With his own hands he was wont to prepare the hosts for the Most Holy Sacrifice; and with the thought ever in his mind, of

showing more and more his love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he used those hands, destined to wield the sceptre, in cultivating a field, following the plough, sowing the seed, and gathering the crop of wheat. Then, he ground the grain carefully, prepared the finest flour from it for baking, and cut out the bread for consecration. O, hands worthy to have wielded the sceptre of the entire world! But how was he rewarded for a devotion so tender? And did other Kings despise him for this? By no means: on the contrary, Almighty God caused the Emperor, Otho I., to cherish such a singular love for this holy king, that he granted him the signal honour of quartering on his arms the imperial device (an eagle sable in field argent), a privilege which was not bestowed upon any other prince of the empire. He was still more abundantly rewarded by the King of heaven, when, by a glorious martyrdom, he gained a diadem of everlasting glory. Thus this good King, in return for his love for Holy Mass, was doubly crowned in this life and in the kingdom of heaven.

EXAMPLES FOR LADIES.

A lady who enters the church decked out in the height of fashion is certain to attract the attention of all present, and perhaps, what God forbid, to draw to herself the adoration due to the adorable Victim of the altar. I need not cite examples to induce such persons to frequent the church every day: they are but too anxious to be seen there. My great object is to impress on them, with what modesty and respect they ought to comport themselves in the house of God, particularly during the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I must say that I have been exceedingly edified by the devotion and modesty of many Roman ladies of rank, who entered the churches and knelt before God's altars attired modestly and with all the reverence due to the Divine Presence. But, I am obliged to acknowledge, also, that I have been very much scandalized by the conduct of some vain and thoughtless creatures, who, arrayed in the fashions and follies of the hour, and with theatrical airs, dared insult the presence of the Most High, as if they were the goddesses of some heathen temple. In order, then, to inspire them with a holy fear in the presence of

these august mysteries, I shall relate the following example from the life of the Blessed Ivetta, a Flemish noblewoman of the Province of Liege. Whilst assisting at Mass, on a Christmas morning, this holy widow found herself kneeling near a young lady of rank, dressed in the fashion of the time. B. Ivetta saw by divine inspiration the workings of the heart of this vain and worldly-minded lady. The wretched creature seemed to attend to the most Holy Sacrifice, and pretended to prepare for Holy Communion, which she was about to receive: but, in reality, she was solely occupied with an impure passion for a person who was then in the church. When this wicked lady stood up to approach the Holy Table, the Blessed Ivetta saw a troop of demons playing and dancing around her. Some of them attended her as servants; others arranged her hair and fashionable garments, whilst many more carefully adjusted her pearls and jewels. She went to the altar, surrounded by this infernal cortege, which seemed to rejoice over her sacrilegious crime. The priest descended from the altar with the adorable Host and placed It on the tongue of this unhappy lady; but, at the same moment, B. Ivetta saw our Saviour separating Himself from

the Sacred Species and ascending towards heaven. Thus, our Lord refused to enter into this wicked soul, and showed His horror of her impure heart. For, the Holy Ghost tells us, "*Wisdom will not enter into a corrupt soul, nor will it dwell in a body given to sin.*" (Wis. i. 4.) But you will say, I am not of the number of those corrupted and wicked persons. Granted that you are not; let me ask what is the use of all that finery, those perfumes, that searching after effect, that desire to see and to be seen. Is not all this scandalous in a Catholic? And does not such conduct "*turn the house of God into a den of thieves?*" For, you seek to turn away the thoughts of all present from God, and to attract them to yourselves.

Enter, then, into yourselves, and make a firm resolution to imitate the glorious St. Elizabeth of Hungary. This holy queen earnestly desired to hear Mass every day; but when she assisted at it, she took off her crown, and removed her rings from her fingers; and thus divested of all her royal ornaments, she used to kneel in a modest attitude, covered with a veil, and was never seen to look around her or to allow her eyes to wander a moment from the altar. Such modesty and devotion were so pleas-

ing to God that He showed His approval of it to the entire congregation. For, at one time during the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, she was surrounded with such a halo of glory that those who saw her were dazzled, and looked on her as an Angel from heaven. Imitate, then, this noble example, and be assured you will be pleasing in the sight of God and men ; and you will derive ineffable blessings from the Holy Sacrifice for time and eternity.

### EXAMPLES FOR WOMEN IN GENERAL.

The Holy Mass is assuredly a great boon for the whole world, as we have already proved, yet we acknowledge that it is not possible for many poor women, on account of the circumstances of their state, to assist at Mass on week days. Those, for instance, who are nursing, or are bound by an obligation of justice or charity to attend the sick ; or who have a bad husband, who forbids them to go out ; these need not attend Mass on week days on account of the difficulties of their state of life. In such cases submission to the Will of God and mortification of their own desires are far more pleasing to God than assisting at the Most Holy Sacrifice.

Furthermore, and I say it for your consolation, by thus obeying, you double your merits; since the goodness of God will accept your intention of hearing Mass, as if you actually had heard it; and He will at the same time reward your obedience to His Divine Will. On the contrary, disobedience would deprive you of both merits; as it would show that you thought more of your own will than of that of God. He has expressly declared in Holy Writ that "*Obedience is better than victims;*" or in other words, that He is more pleased with a humble submission to His Divine Will than with Masses which are not of obligation.

But what shall I say of you, when you go to Mass solely to indulge in idle conversations, voluntary distractions and feminine curiosity, and thus return from the church with your hands empty and without the least fruit from this source of infinite graces? This is what happened to a poor peasant woman who dwelt near her village church. This good woman, to obtain a special favour from God, which she earnestly desired, made a vow to hear a great number of Masses during the year. Hence, whenever she heard the bell ringing for Mass she immediately put off all her work

and hurried to the church, even through sleet and snow, and the most inclement weather. When she returned home she was accustomed to count the number of Masses she had heard, and in order to assure herself that she had punctually fulfilled her vow, she placed a bean, each time, in a little box that she kept safely locked. At the end of the year, not doubting but that she had generously fulfilled her promise, had acquired great merits and procured great glory to God, she hastened to open the box; but what was her surprise and horror when she found only one bean of the great number she had deposited therein. She was overwhelmed with astonishment and grief, so much so that she made her complaints to God with sighs and tears, saying: "O Lord, how has it happened that of all the Masses I have heard, I have found only one marked down for me, by this single bean? Certainly I never failed to be present in the church, even when it was most inconvenient to leave my cottage. Neither did I allow the weather, rain, frost or snow to prevent me from attending Holy Mass." She then consulted a holy and learned priest, who questioned her, as to her dispositions on the way to church; and the devotion with

which she assisted at Mass. She answered that on her way to church she occupied herself solely with gossip and nonsense, and when Mass was being celebrated she was in the habit of whispering to those around her and keeping her thoughts always fixed on the business of her house and farm. "Behold," said the priest, "the true cause of the loss of so many Masses; gossiping, curiosity, and voluntary distractions have robbed you of their merits. The demon has gained the profits, and your good Angel-guardian took away the beans which served as marks in order that you might understand how easily you could lose the fruits of your good works, when you have not performed them with the necessary dispositions." Here, I ask you to make a serious reflection and self-examination on the many Masses you have heard during your life. How many of them have been acceptable to God? What does your conscience answer? If it tell you that very few have been meritorious before God, take care, in future, and resolve to hear Mass with all possible devotion. But if, unhappily, you are of the number of those wicked persons, who do the work of the devil by dragging souls down to hell, even in the very sanctuary of God, listen to the

following dreadful example which ought to make you tremble:—

In a book named "*Dormi Securo*," it is related that a woman reduced to the direst poverty, was, one day, wandering about in lonely places in a state of despair, when, all at once, the demon appeared to her and promised that, if she would undertake to distract the faithful during Mass with idle gossip, she would become richer than she had ever been. The miserable woman accepted the infernal proposal, and commenced to use all her efforts to do the devil's work, so that it was impossible to remain near her whilst Mass was being celebrated, or during a sermon, without being distracted. But the justice of God did not fail to be avenged on this impious conduct. The wretched woman was one day surprised by a violent storm, the lightning darted forth and struck her alone in the midst of a crowd of persons, and in an instant, reduced her to a handful of ashes.

Learn, then, by this dreadful example to shun all those who, by their idle gossip and irreverences in church, become the instruments of the devil, otherwise you will expose yourself to the dreadful anger and chastisement of the Most High.

### EXAMPLES FOR TRADESMEN AND ARTIZANS.

The idol of our time is self-interest, and alas! how many bow down before this false god, and unceasingly offer to it all the homage of their hearts. Hence it happens that, following this idol, they forget the Creator of heaven and earth, and cast themselves into an abyss of evils, even in this life. On the contrary, says the Royal Prophet: "*They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*," but shall abound in all good. This is above all verified in those who, before they begin their ordinary work of the day, make it a rule to assist at Holy Mass. The following example, which is related of three merchants of Gubbio in Italy, will prove this truth:—

Three merchants went to a fair held in a town of Cisterno, in Italy; and after having sold their goods, two of them prepared to return home, and arranged to leave next morning at dawn, so that they could arrive at their own houses before nightfall. The third merchant, however, protested that the next day being Sunday, he could not think of returning unless he had first heard Mass. "If, then, you wish me to accompany you," he said, "you must

assist with me at Holy Mass, and after having taken breakfast we will begin our journey together with the blessing of God. And, after all," he added, "if we cannot arrive in the evening at Gubbio there are several good inns on the way." His companions, however, would not listen to this wise and salutary advice, but answered that Almighty God would have compassion on them if they lost Mass for once in those difficult circumstances. On Sunday morning, then, before dawn, and without entering the church, they mounted their horses and set out for home. They arrived very soon at the torrent of Corfuone, which they found so greatly swollen by the rain which had fallen on the previous night, that the flood rolled furiously against the wooden bridge, and shook it to its very foundations. The unlucky travellers were obliged to cross it, but they had scarcely reached the middle when the rush of water became so violent that it broke down the bridge, and they were precipitated into the depths of the flood and drowned: thus losing their lives, their money, and perhaps, also, their immortal souls.

The peasants of the neighbourhood hastened to the spot on hearing of the calamity, and after having dragged the

river, they found the corpses, which they laid upon the bank in order to have them identified by their friends, and to obtain Christian burial for them. In the meantime the third merchant who had remained to hear Mass, set out on his journey, and reaching the river, saw the crowd around the dead bodies. Drawing near he recognised, to his horror, the corpses of his two companions. He listened to the account of the calamity with the greatest attention, and raising his eyes to heaven, he thanked God from his heart for having preserved him from a like misfortune. O, how often, then, and how fervently did he not bless the hour in which he assisted at the Holy Sacrifice, and to which he now very justly attributed his preservation. On his return home he related the sad event everywhere, and excited in the hearts of all who heard him the most lively sentiments of faith in the most Holy Sacrifice.*

O accursed avarice! accursed avarice! I repeat, that separates a man's soul from God, and prevents him from attending to the great affair of his salvation.

In order, therefore, that the avaricious may enter into themselves, I will prove

* Lohner. C. II. Tit. 64.

this truth more clearly by an example from Holy Scripture. Samson, as you are aware, was bound in vain, even with the sinews of oxen, and with strong ropes, never before used. At last, he made known to the treacherous Dalila that his strength lay in the hair of his head, and no sooner was it cut off than he lost all his wonderful power, and fell into the hands of the Philistines, who deprived him of his sight and condemned him to turn the wheel of a corn-mill. Now, what was Samson's greatest folly? Was it in allowing himself to be bound so firmly, hand and foot? No, assuredly; but his folly consisted in telling the secret of his strength, and allowing his hair to be cut off, for after this was done, he was powerless.

Now, if a merchant or trader allow himself to be completely immersed in his accounts, bills of sale, and a thousand other business engagements, does he incur the awful danger of avarice so condemned by God? By no means; for the danger does not consist in all this, but in allowing his hair to be cut off at the same time. Let me explain myself:—Suppose a merchant has a heavy pressure of business, but on hearing the bell for Mass, says to himself:—"Let business wait a while until I have

first heard Mass." Such a person is Samson bound by his business, but not shorn :—bound by the thousand cords of his business, but not shorn of his secret source of strength. Another is bound by seven more cords, workmen to engage, bills to pay, letters to write, correspondence to answer,—one man expects a reply, another his money by cheque, etc. Alas, what a number of fetters? No matter, however, for when Sunday comes round, or a Patron's Festival is being celebrated, he disengages himself from all his fetters, and goes to Church to assist at several Masses on those days with the greatest attention and devotion. This, again, is Samson bound, but not shorn ; for, in the midst of all his distracting duties he never loses sight of the great business of his eternal salvation. Give me your most serious attention now,—if you are bound down by a thousand ties of self-interest, without being able to sever them ; if you neglect the Sacraments, and seldom or never assist at Mass on week days, then, I say, you are become the miserable Samson, who is bound and shorn of his hidden strength. In this case though your gains may be just, yet I say that the means you take to add to them is very injurious to your spiri-

tual welfare, and this spirit of avarice will bring on you the punishment of Samson:—the roof of the house you are thus building up shall fall in upon you and crush you to the earth. "*And,*" then, "*whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?*" (Luke xii. 20.) But I hear you answer: "These avaricious persons cannot be moved but by a tune in their own key." Well, be it so, let them grow rich; let them amass immense profits. But what is the surest way to this end? It is solely to assist every morning with the necessary attention and devotion at Holy Mass: I can easily convince you of this truth by the example of two artizans:—One of them was burdened with a wife and children, and even grandchildren; the other was a married man, but without children. The first had provided for his family, and all his undertakings had wonderfully prospered. His shops were constantly filled with customers, and he made such large profits, that every year he was able to save a considerable sum: this he reserved for his children and for his old age. The other, who, as I have already said, was childless, had no success in anything he had undertaken, and had almost died through the want of the common necessaries of life. This wretched

man, one day meeting his prosperous neighbour, said to him : "How is it that you get on so well? God seems to shower down every blessing upon you, and I, poor wretch, can scarcely raise my head, whilst starvation is ever at my door." "I shall call to-morrow," answered his neighbour, "and I shall show you the secret of all my success in business." The next morning he called on his friend and led him to a neighbouring Church where they both heard Mass ; they, then, returned together to the poor man's workshop. This they did for three successive days. The poor man, then, said to his friend: "If nothing else is to be done but to go to the Church every morning to hear Mass, I know the way well enough without troubling you." "That is just what I wish you to do," said the prosperous trader; "hear Mass every day, with devotion, my dear friend, and I promise you that your business will prosper like mine." And so it happened. For no sooner did he begin to hear Mass every day, than he was well supplied with customers, was able to pay all his debts, and to establish his household in comfort and happiness.* If you believe in the

* Surius, Vita S. Joan. Eleemos.

Gospel, how can you doubt this truth? For does not Jesus Christ tell us: *Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you.*" (Matt. vi. 33.) Make the trial for a year, hear Holy Mass with devotion every day during that time, and if your temporal interests are not then prospering, lay the blame at my door. But there is little fear of this: you will, on the contrary, have good reason to thank me for having given you this advice.

### FOR LABOURERS AND SERVANTS.

The great Apostle says: "*If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*" (1 Tim. v. 8.) This care is to be extended not only to their bodies, but still more to their souls. Hence it follows that if it would be a grave crime to deprive servants of their corporal food, it is far more heinous to deprive them of the nourishment of the soul, especially of hearing Mass on days of obligation, a loss which can never be compensated by the riches of any master on earth. When God established His covenant with Abraham, He commanded that not only the Father

of the Faithful, but also his whole household should be circumcised :—" *He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised.*" Here, then, is an evident proof that a good Christian should not be content with going himself to Holy Mass, but he should strive to induce everyone in his house to do likewise. This holy rule was so well observed by St. Elzearius, Count of Ariano, that he himself made it a point to see his servants, male and female, his pages and men-in-waiting, every day, at Mass. This pious custom, thank God, is also practised by the nobility, Cardinals, and dignitaries of Rome. You may be assured that the time your servants thus spend at Mass, is not time lost for them or for you; for God will reward you and them a hundred-fold for those few minutes consecrated to His service and love. St. Isidore was only a poor farm labourer, yet he never omitted to hear daily Mass; and God, in order to show how agreeable to Him was this humble man's devotion, at one time, caused Angels to plough his fields whilst he was assisting at Mass. If God will not work such miracles for you, He will, you may be certain, repay your piety in other ways. This you will see more clearly by the following example

of a poor vine-dresser, who lived by his daily labour. This good man, every day, before going to work, was in the habit of assisting at the Most Holy Sacrifice. One morning having gone to the Market Square, he waited there for an employer to give him a day's work; but hearing the bell of the village church inviting the people to attend Mass, he, according to his custom, hurried away to be present at the Most Holy Sacrifice. Having heard one Mass, he yielded to his devotion, and remained for a second, that had already begun. When he returned to the Square he found that all the labourers had already been hired, and that no employer now remained for him. The poor man, very much dejected, was returning home, when, on the way, he met a rich gentleman who accosted him and asked why he was so sad. "How can I be otherwise," he answered, "this morning on account of assisting at Mass I lost my day's work." "Don't be the least troubled about that," said the gentleman, "go to church, hear another Mass for my intention, and I will give you your day's hire." The poor man, overjoyed at the proposal, returned to the church, and heard all the Masses said there that day. In the evening he went to the rich man's house and received twelve

pence, the usual wages for a day's work in that town. He was going home very happy to have received his day's hire, when he met a stranger of a very majestic appearance, (I believe the Saviour of the world, Himself,) * who asked him how much he had got for a day so well employed. On hearing that the whole remuneration amounted only to twelve pence, He said: "Go back to that rich man, and tell him if he do not increase the wages for such a meritorious day's work it will fare ill with him." The simple minded labourer carried this message to the rich man, who gave him five pence more, and bade him go in peace. The poor man was very well pleased with this additional sum, but the stranger was not satisfied. He, again, said to the poor man: "It is not enough; go back to the miser and tell him if he do not increase your wages he may prepare himself for a dreadful calamity." He went back, as ordered, and very humbly, and with fear and trembling, delivered the message. The gentleman, who was touched by God, interiorly received the poor man kindly, and gave him one hundred pence with some new and good clothing.

* Nichol. Lay. Tract. 6. d. 10. Miss. G. 100.

I am sure, you will, with reason, admire Divine Providence thus aiding this poor man, on account of the devotion with which he had assisted every day at Mass. But still more worthy of admiration was the grace bestowed on that gentleman, by the Divine mercy ; for, the following night the Saviour appeared to him in sleep and revealed that on account of the Masses which the poor man had heard for him, He had remitted the sentence of sudden death, which had been pronounced against him, and which would have plunged him into hell. At this frightful announcement, he awoke, and full of heartfelt sorrow for his wicked life, he ever afterwards attended Mass daily, and caused a great number of Masses to be celebrated for himself in different churches ; and after a well spent life, he had the happiness of dying a holy and happy death.

See, now, how infinitely rich in bounty is the loving Heart of our dear Lord to those who are truly devout to the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Go, then, my poor hard-worked friends, to Holy Mass, and be assured that if you assist every day at the Divine Oblation, you will find consolation and peace, amidst all the trials and poverty of your state in life.

## SERVING AT MASS.

In our days this office has devolved on mere boys or pious youths, though the greatest monarchs of the world are not worthy of such an honour. St. Bonaventure tells us that this is the office of angels, because during the Divine Mysteries many angels are serving God in this sacred function. This is confirmed by St. Nilus, who saw hosts of angels assisting the ministers when St. John Chrysostom celebrated. The glorious St. Matilda saw the soul of a lay brother after his death, crowned with ineffable glory, because he had always evinced extraordinary diligence and devotion whilst serving at Mass. St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angel of the Schools, justly appreciating the hidden treasure contained in this office, would not be content, if after offering the Sacred Mysteries he was not allowed to serve another Mass. Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England, took the greatest delight in this holy work, so much so, that on one occasion, when taunted by a minister of state, who said that the king would be offended, if he learned that the Chancellor had so humbled his dignity, he replied: "My lord, the king cannot be offended

with me for the service I render to his Lord, nay, to the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Some persons belonging to religious communities are often reluctant to perform this holy office : so much so, that they must be almost compelled to serve Mass. This is a great folly ; for instead of being forced to serve at the altar, they ought rather ardently to desire the honour of performing a service so holy, that the angels themselves, and the Blessed in heaven, could envy them. Great vigilance, however, should be employed in instructing those who are permitted to serve at Mass. They must be taught to keep their eyes modestly cast down, and to observe that strict decorum, so necessary, in the presence of the awful majesty of God, Who is on the altar during the Adorable Sacrifice. Hence their whole exterior ought to exhibit the greatest reverence and humility. They must, moreover, be taught to pronounce the words *distinctly*, *slowly*, and in a tone not too low to be heard by the priest, nor so high, or loud, as to distract those who are celebrating at other altars. Special care should be taken to exclude boys who cannot understand the dread function they are performing, and who may be a subject of annoyance and distraction to the celebrant

and people. My earnest prayer to God is that he will inspire men of good will to give edification to the people, by performing an office so praiseworthy and so holy; and that, like St. Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia, they will not only attend several Masses every day, but also serve the priest, as he did, with the modesty and humility of an angel.

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### INDULGENCED OFFERING OF MASS ACCORDING TO THE METHOD OF ST. LEONARD.*

Eternal Father, I offer to Thee the Sacrifice which Thy beloved Son Jesus made of Himself upon the Cross, and which He now renews upon this altar; I offer it to Thee in the name of all creatures, together with the Masses which have been celebrated in the whole world, in order to adore Thee, and to give Thee the honour which Thou dost deserve; to render to Thee due thanks for Thy innumerable benefits, to appease Thy anger for our sins, and to give Thee due satisfaction for them; to entreat Thee also for myself, for the Church, for the whole world, and for the blessed souls in purgatory. Amen.

Indulgence of three years, once a day, if said at Mass.

* See "New Franciscan Manual," p. 86.

### A SERIOUS WARNING FOR THOSE WHO REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS TREASURE OF HOLY MASS.

Two great Doctors of the Church, the angelic St. Thomas, and the Seraphic St. Bonaventure, teach that the thrice Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is of infinite value, both by reason of the Victim offered, which is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our beloved Lord, as also by reason of the primary offerer, who is Jesus Christ Himself. And, yet, how many there are who set so little value on this inestimable treasure, that they esteem it less than the least of their most perishable and sordid interests. My principal end, in writing this little book, is, solely to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of all those who may deign to read it. I am confident, that any one who studies its pages will be enlightened by them, and will appreciate hereafter this Hidden Pearl, whose worth is beyond all price. And, if up to the present this most Holy Sacrifice has been to them a Hidden Treasure, now that they know its infinite value, they will strive by every means in their power to become possessed of it, by assisting daily at Holy Mass. Let me then conclude this little

work with the following dreadful example, which will place a seal on all I have written on this matter :—

Æneas Sylvius, who was afterwards Pope Pius II., tells us that in a city of Germany called Suezia, there lived a gentleman of noble birth, who, after having lost the greatest part of his property, retired to a remote country house to live sparingly on his reduced income. But here he became a prey to the most profound melancholy, so much so, that he was on the verge of despair for the past, and of dread for the future. The demon, seeing him in this wretched state, repeatedly tempted him to commit suicide, and thus put an end to his miseries; for, said the tempter, "there is nothing for a rotten tree but the woodman's axe." In this combat against temptation and remorse, the nobleman had recourse to a holy Confessor, who gave him this good advice: "Do not allow one day to pass without hearing Mass; and if you do this, you need not dread these temptations of the devil." The gentleman was so pleased with the advice that he resolved never to be absent from Mass on any account whatever. And, in order to make sure of this he engaged a chaplain to offer up every day the Most Holy Sacrifice for him, at

which he was always present with the most edifying devotion. One day, however, this chaplain was obliged to assist at the first Mass of a priest recently ordained. The nobleman, afraid lest he should lose Mass on that day, set out for the church whither his chaplain had already gone. On the way he met a peasant, who told him that he might as well turn back, as the Mass was already ended, and that there was to be no other Mass that day in the church. Deeply afflicted at this news, the gentleman began to weep bitterly, and to repeat over and over again : "Alas! what will become of me, a miserable man? What shall I do to-day? Perhaps this may be the last day of my life." The country man was astonished to see him thus troubled for the loss of one Mass, and said : "If you wish, I shall, in exchange for your cloak, sell my part of the Mass I have just heard." The gentleman readily consented to the strange proposal, and gave his cloak to the peasant, hoping to gain something because of his good intention of hearing Mass on that day. He afterwards walked on to the church where he knelt down and remained some time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Having finished his devotions, he returned home, but when he reached the spot where the

peasant had made that most absurd and execrable bargain, to his horror he saw before him the unfortunate wretch hanging from the branch of a tree and already dead. In fact the temptation to suicide had left him and entered into the heart of the unhappy peasant, who voluntarily had deprived himself of the helps of grace he had received in the Most Holy Sacrifice; and had thus become an easy prey to the demon of despair. The nobleman, considering all this seriously on his way home, was firmly convinced that his confessor had shown him the most powerful means of overcoming the attacks of the devil, and he then renewed his resolution of never allowing a day to pass without hearing holy Mass.

I now wish to draw from this dreadful example, two great and necessary truths:—first, the gross ignorance of some Christians, who, instead of setting a just value on the infinite treasure of Holy Mass, consider it a trifling matter of filthy lucre. Hence that scandalous language of some persons who say to a priest: "How much must I pay you for a Mass?"—Pay for a Mass! Where will you find a sum of money worth one Mass? Since one Mass exceeds in value, not only the riches of the èntire world, but even of heaven itself. Such ignorance

is, indeed, intolerable. The trifling sum you give the Priest is solely for his sustenance; but it is not in any sense the payment or purchase-money of Holy Mass, which is beyond all price. I beseech you, then, once more, to hear as many Masses as possible, and to have as many as you can afford to be celebrated for you; thus you will lay up for yourself treasures exceeding great, both for time and eternity.

The second great truth to be drawn from this example, is the efficacy of the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to obtain for us every blessing from heaven, and to preserve us from every spiritual and temporal misfortune. But, above all, it saves us from the many snares and temptations of the devil. Let me, then, repeat over and over again, go to daily Mass; go unceasingly to your daily Mass, if you wish to overcome all your enemies, and to see the devil crushed and trampled on beneath your feet. If this devotion be practised by all the Faithful, then we shall see the fervour of the Primitive Christians renewed in our days, and God will be sovereignly honoured and glorified in the whole Church.

Now, one parting advice before you finish the lecture of this little book. If you wish to reap abundant fruits from the Most

Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, you must attend it with the greatest devotion. I have already repeatedly insisted on this point, in the course of this work, and I now insist on it, still more, at its close. Attend, then, with devotion at Holy Mass, and put in practice what is prescribed in the second chapter of this little book. If you do so, I am certain you will quickly find a change in your own heart, and you will enjoy the immense riches contained in this Hidden Treasure of Holy Mass. God bless you, and pray for me—say one Hail Mary.*

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### SHORT VISIT TO THE SACRED HEART IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.†

By St. Leonard.

I love Thee, O Sacred Heart of my Jesus, enclosed in the Sacrament of the Altar, and I desire to make amends for the many outrages Thou receivest here, in this Divine Mystery of love, on the part of infidels, heretics, bad Christians, and especially souls consecrated to Thee. Amen.

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* The Holy Author does not now require prayers; but the Editor of this New Translation very earnestly solicits this Hail Mary from the readers of this little book

† From the "New Franciscan Manual," Duffy & Co

# A METHOD OF HEARING MASS

## BY WAY OF MEDITATION;

### WITH DEVOUT AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION AND DEATH OF OUR LORD.

According to the Second Method of St. Leonard: See p. 60.

Before the service begins, while waiting for the priest to come in. Call to mind the Last Supper, in which Christ instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass, and gave Himself to us all to be our food. Oughtest thou not to acknowledge and give Him thanks for this excess of love?

AFFECTIONS.

I acknowledge, O Lord Jesus, that *having loved Thine own, Thou didst* truly *love them even unto the end.—John* xiii. 1.

For, behold, "Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me."—*Ps.* xxii. 6.

"*I will offer*" also *unto Thee* now "*the sacrifice of praise, and will call upon the name of the Lord.*"—*Ps.* cxv. 7.

When the priest is descending from the altar before commencing the Mass. Consider Christ after Supper going from Mount Sion (where the Supper had been held)

to the Garden of Gethsemane. And His disciples followed Him.—*Luke* xxii. 39. And wilt thou forsake thy God in the time of temptation and trial?

AFFECTIONS.

It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God.—*Ps.* lxxii. 28.

Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.—*Luke* xxii. 33.

At the Confession. Contemplate Christ praying in His agony, when His sweat became as drops of Blood trickling down upon the ground.—*Luke* xxii, 44. Thy sins forced out His blood; and wilt thou not grieve on account of them?

AFFECTIONS.

Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night?—*Jer.* ix. 1.

Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee; I am not now worthy to be called Thy son.—*Luke* xv. 21.

O God, be merciful to me a sinner.—*Luke* xviii. 13.

When the priest kisses the altar, and at the Introit. Consider Judas betraying Christ with a kiss. And art not thou also a traitor, while thou rejectest thy Saviour to embrace some trifling pleasure?

AFFECTIONS.

Impute not to me, my Lord, the iniquity,

nor remember the injuries, of Thy servant. —2 *Kings* xix. 19.

I acknowledge my iniquity, and my sin is ever before me.—*Ps.* l. 4.

At the Kyrie eleison. Reflect on the threefold denial of Peter, who did not repent until the Lord looked upon him.—*Luke* xxii. 61. How often art thou ashamed of thy Lord Jesus, and deniest Him before men! When wilt thou repent?

AFFECTIONS.

I have sinned, O Lord.—2 *Kings* xii. 13.

Cast me not away from Thy presence.—*Ps.* l. 12.

Look upon me, and have mercy upon me.—*Ps.* xxiv.

At the Gloria. Think of the exultation of the Jews at the mocking and sufferings of Christ. And art not thou as one of them, if thou takest pleasure in wicked things?

AFFECTIONS.

Convert us, O God our Saviour, and turn away Thine anger from us.—*Ps.* lxxxiv. 5.

At the Collect, Epistle, and Gradual. Think of all the accusations, mockeries, blows, and spittings, which Christ endured in the houses of Annas and Caiphas.—*John* xviii. 22. Christ was silent as a lamb before His shearers: but how easily art thou made angry, and reproachest thine accusers.

AFFECTIONS.

Thou art my patience, O Lord.—*Ps.* lxx. 5.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words.—*Ps.* cxl. 4.

At the Gospel, which the priest reads, crossing over to the other side of the altar. Meditate how Christ was hurried from Caiphas to Pilate, questioned concerning His teaching, and rebuked.—*Luke* xxiii. Dost thou value the precious doctrine of Jesus? Dost thou receive it carefully thyself, and hand it on to others?

AFFECTIONS.

Direct my steps according to Thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me. —*Ps.* cxviii. 133.

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths.—*Ps.* cxviii.

I will teach Thy ways unto the wicked; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.—*Ps.* l. 14.

At the Credo. Meditate upon Christ sent by Pilate to Herod, and by him sent back again to Pilate (when he obtained not the signs he expected to see), clothed in a white garment, as a silly person, not worthy of credit. *Luke* xxiii. Art thou among those who, before they will believe, demand of Christ, that they may see a sign?—*Mark* xii. 59.

AFFECTIONS.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.—*John* xx. 29.

I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief.—*Mark* ix. 23.

At the Offertory. Meditate upon the resignation of Christ, and His offering Himself to bear all things for the glory of His Father and the redemption of mankind.—*Ps.* xxxix. Art thou prepared to endure adversity and affliction?

AFFECTIONS.

I will take the Chalice of Salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.—*Ps.* cxv. 4.

At the Lavabo. Reflect how Pilate sought to excuse himself for his most wicked deed by washing his hands, but did not escape the guilt itself.—*Matt.* xxvii. 24. How often dost thou seek to conceal thy sins, and to make excuses for them? So doing, thou dost rather increase than diminish them.

AFFECTIONS.

I confess against myself my injustice unto the Lord.—*Ps.* xxxi. 6.

O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my offences are not hidden from Thee. —*Ps.* lxviii. 6.

At the Orate fratres. Meditate upon Christ, about to be condemned by Pilate, presented to the people in a crown of thorns and a purple robe.—*John* xix. 4. What will be thy state, O man, when thou shalt stand before Christ the Judge at the last day?

AFFECTIONS.

I will let go my speech against myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God: Do not condemn me.—*Job* x. 1.

At the Preface. Reflect that the very same Jews who, five days before, saluted Christ with Hosannas, now cry out, Crucify Him, crucify Him.—*John* xix. 6. Art thou guilty of similar inconstancy?

AFFECTIONS.

Perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved.—*Ps.* xvi. 6.

At the Canon. Meditate upon Jesus bearing His own cross as He went up to Calvary.—*John* xix. 17. Dost thou not hear the voice of Christ? If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.—*Matt.* xvi. 24.

AFFECTIONS.

Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments.—*Cant.* i. 3.

God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—*Gal.* vi. 14.

At the Elevation of the Host. Meditate on Christ, nailed to the cross by His hands and His feet, set forth as a spectacle to the whole world.—*Mark* xx. 25. Behold, O man, thy Redeemer! With what affection hast thou hitherto embraced Him, who here, with extended arms, invites thee to His embrace?

AFFECTIONS.

My beloved to me, and I to him.—*Cant.* ii. 16.

Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or danger? I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Rom.* viii. 35.

At the Elevation of the Chalice. Reflect how profusely Christ poured forth His blood from His five sacred wounds for the washing away of our sins. Run to Him, O sinner, that you may be cleansed, and draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains.—*Is.* xii. 3.

AFFECTIONS.

Suffer me that I may lament my sorrow a little, before I go and return no more, to a land that is dark, and covered with the shadow of death.—*Job* xx. 20.

Perhaps darkness shall cover me.—*Ps.* cxxxviii. 11.

At the Memento for the Dead. O Jesus, enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.—*Luke* i. 79.

At the Pater noster. Meditate upon the seven words of Christ uttered by Him on the cross: 1. Christ prayed for His enemies: what dost thou do? 2. The thief, repenting, obtained heaven. Learn seriously to repent and do penance, but delay it not to the last. 3. Christ commends His mother to John, and John to His mother; to whom canst thou better commend thyself? 4. Christ complains that He is forsaken; and dost thou expect consolation as thy due? 5. Christ thirsted for thy salvation; and dost thou turn away from it with loathing? 6. Christ announced that all His torments were finished: thus shall all thy good and evil in this world be brought to a close. 7. Lastly, after the example of Christ, com-

mend thy spirit into the hands of thy heavenly Father.—*Luke* xxiii. 46.

AFFECTIONS.

And we also forgive our debtors.—*Matt.* vi. 12.

Make me also to hear, This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.—*Luke* xxiii. 43.

O Mary, behold Thy Son!—*John* xix. 26.

Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.—*Luke* xxiii. 46.

At the Division of the Sacred Host. Reflect upon the separation of Christ's soul from His Body.—*Matt.* xxvii 50. It is appointed to all men once to die.—*Heb.* ix. 27.

AFFECTIONS.

Let my soul die the death of the just.—*Num.* xxiii. 10.

Whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's.—*Rom.* xiv. 8.

At the Agnus Dei, when the priest strikes his breast. Reflect how many of those who saw Christ dying on the cross returned striking their breasts.—*Luke* xxiii. 48. And dost not thou strike thy breast in token of true sorrow for thy sins?

AFFECTIONS.

Lord, I strike my breast with the publican, and say, Be merciful to me a sinner. —*Luke* xviii. 13.

And now, O Lord, think of me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offences, nor those of my parents.—*Job* iii. 3.

At the Communion of the Priest. Meditate upon the burial of Christ.—*Luke* xix. 41. He asks from thee thy heart for a sepulchre.

AFFECTIONS.

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.—*Ps.* lvi. 10.

At the last Collect, which the priest reads with a loud voice. Meditate upon Christ's joyful and glorious resurrection.—*Mark* xvi. 6. Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.—*Colos.* iii. 3.

ASPIRATIONS.

When shall I come and appear before the face of God?—*Ps.* xli. 2.

I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.—*Phil.* i. 23.

At the Benediction. Meditate how Christ, ascending up into heaven, blessed His disciples.—*Mark* xvi. 19 Unto this are ye called, that ye may inherit a blessing.—1 *Pet.* iii. 9.

AFFECTIONS.

Save, O Lord, Thy people, and bless Thy inheritance.—*Ps.* xxvii. 9.

May God our God bless us; may God bless us.—*Ps.* lxvi. 7.

## PRAYER AT THE CONCLUSION OF MASS.

Accept, O holy Trinity, this sacrifice of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which I have offered to Thy divine Majesty in remembrance of His Passion and Death; and by His infinite merits, I beseech Thee, that all my defects and negligences may be supplied, for He is the propitiation for our sins. Amen.

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## PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

By St. Leonard.

Hail, Wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, opened by the cruel lance, and from which gushed forth Blood and water to wash away the stains of our sins. Pierce my heart, O Lord, with the darts of Thy love, so that, in all my actions, I may regard Thy love above all, and love my neighbour as myself for love of Thee. By that life-giving Blood and water that flowed from Thy side, O beloved Saviour, purify my heart, so that being cleansed from all stain of sin, I may be admitted to contemplate Thy face, for ever, in heaven. Amen.

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# PLAIN INSTRUCTIONS

ON THE

# FREQUENTATION OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Abridged from the Works of St. Leonard.*

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THE most essential duty of a Christian is the frequentation of the Sacraments. All other practices of piety, such as the Rosary, visits to the B. Sacrament, fasting, disciplines, works of charity, etc., are good and salutary ; but the frequentation of the Sacraments is the foundation of the spiritual life ; and there is nothing the demon fears more, or that puts him in a greater fury than to see a soul approach the Sacraments regularly. A priest of eminent piety exorcising a possessed person forced the demon to acknowledge what most displeases him in a Christian, and most efficaciously baffles his craft. The evil spirit, with great reluctance, answered : "There is

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* From the "New Franciscan Manual," Duffy & Co., Dublin.

nothing in the Church of God that destroys and annihilates our strength like frequent Confession and Communion." Every one experiences this: you never meet so many obstacles, and so many difficulties, as when you prepare to go to Confession. Hence you put it off from month to month, and often for a whole year. You never allow eight days to pass without cleaning your house; and does your soul merit less care than the floor you tread on? You say, you have your business to arrange, your accounts to audit, your letters to write,—and your soul? . . . . Every month containing more than seven hundred hours, why then cannot you find, at least, one hour to arrange the affairs of your soul, amongst the many hours you spend on your body and on your business? Many persons imagine that Confession is only necessary for those in the state of mortal sin; and hence they cannot understand why the saints went to Confession every day, and some of them, even twice a day; not knowing, that this Sacrament always confers a two-fold grace:—*sanctifying* grace, and *sacramental* grace. Sanctifying grace is a supernatural quality which renders our soul a participant of the beauty of God Himself, and consequently agreeable to His sight, and

pleasing to His Heart. Sacramental grace consists in certain special helps which accompany sanctifying grace, and are necessary to the end for which Jesus Christ instituted the Sacraments. When, then, you confess your sins, you receive sanctifying grace, or in other words, your soul becomes beautiful, agreeable, and dear to God ; and if you have the happiness to communicate, this beauty is still more enhanced. Sanctifying grace is such a beautiful ornament that when a soul is clothed with it, particularly after Holy Communion, there is no beauty in heaven, nor on earth, which it does not equal and surpass. "It surpasses the brilliancy of the stars, the beauty of the heavens, and even that of the angels, according to their natural perfections," as St. Thomas teaches. And remember, you can receive this sanctifying grace as often as you confess and communicate worthily.

By omitting Confession and Communion, you not only deprive yourself of an increase of sanctifying grace, which renders your soul so beautiful before God, but you also deprive.yourself of sacramental grace, which produces such admirable effects on the soul. The wonderful effects of this grace, in the way of perfection, are innumerable. The Blessed Eucharist, above all, as the

Council of Trent teaches, confers sacramental grace, "which delivers us from our daily faults, and preserves us from mortal sin." But why have you not experienced these effects in your soul? The following example will answer this question. A certain person confessed and communicated very often, but without making any progress in virtue: fearing on account of this to have some hidden fault on her conscience, she examined herself for a long time, and finding nothing serious, she made known her trouble to St. Bridget. The Saint, having had recourse to God, learned by revelation that the cause of the little fruit this person derived from Communion, was owing to her want of preparation for the reception of this august Sacrament. Behold the reason why such little fruit is derived from so many Confessions and Communions!

But in what ought this preparation consist, in order to receive not only an increase of sanctifying grace, but also sacramental grace with all the effects it produces? This can be seen in the following preparation for Confession and Communion.

# PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION.

By St. Leonard.*

To make a good Confession, the most perfect method, as well as the easiest, is to imagine that this is to be the last Confession of your life. St. Teresa implored preachers to treat often of this matter, as God revealed to her that a great number are damned for not having made good Confessions. Bad Confessions are caused (1), by a want of examination of conscience; (2), by a want of true sorrow; (3), by a false shame in concealing some mortal sin in Confession.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

For this you need not read many books, or printed examinations, but read the one book I counsel you, that is the book written on your heart, by the finger of God. Be assured each time you had the misfortune to commit a mortal, or a venial sin, your conscience upbraided you. Confess all you find written in this book, and then you may remain in peace. If you have only venial sins, do not rack your brain with a minute and scrupulous examen, as this would only trouble your conscience, and fatigue your

* From "The New Franciscan Manual," p. 176.

confessor. No scruples then, in your examination, but great diligence in exciting your heart to true contrition!

### CONTRITION

There are two sorts of contrition, *perfect* and *imperfect*. The first is sorrow for sin on account of the infinite goodness of God; the second, *imperfect*, on account of the punishment due to sin for having offended God. How many are there who when going to Confession think only of what they are to say to the priest without, in the least, exciting themselves to contrition? or, if they think of contrition, never reflect on the motives of this most necessary part of the sacrament. If you do not make an act of contrition on account of the infinite goodness of God, or the pains due to your sins, you cannot be pardoned by God. He cannot pardon any one who is not truly sorry for having offended Him. An act of true contrition is, then, the golden key that opens Paradise; but in order to make it perfectly, accustom yourself to repeat it as often as you can. A person told me that God having made known to her the grievousness of her sins, she made more than a thousand acts of contrition every day.

O how agreeable to God is such a soul! But do not imagine it is necessary to have a sensible feeling of this; or that you must feel your heart melting within you with compunction; or that you must shed an abundance of tears. No; true sorrow has its seat in the will. It suffices that it is *reasonable;* it is not necessary it should be *sensible;* in other words, it suffices that you detest the evils you committed for the reasons expressed above, and that you would not be guilty of such again for all the riches of the world. In order to obtain this hearty sorrow you must earnestly implore the grace of God, and you must reflect seriously on the great evil of mortal sin, the eternal punishment due to it, and the infinite goodness of God whom you have offended.

CONFESSION.

After having thus excited yourself to a hearty sorrow for your sins, approach the Confessional with the same recollectedness, silence, and modesty, as if you were to see our Lord Jesus Christ Himself seated there to hear your Confession.

When you enter the Confessional ask the blessing of your Confessor, saying, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned." Then say the Confiteor to, "*Through my most*

*grievous fault,*" and observe the following directions in confessing your sins:—

1. Begin by declaring the most grievous sins that burden your conscience, and clearly state their number, and necessary circumstances.

2. Avoid all mention of the names of your accomplices, without, however, omitting the necessary circumstances and nature of the sins committed.

3. Confess humbly and sincerely, and not as if you were relating a story, *e.g.*, I was in such a place and met a certain person, etc. —but simply say, "I committed such or such a sin (naming it), and so many times."

4. Avoid excusing yourself or blaming others, but accuse yourself, and no one else.

5. Use the most decent terms in accusing yourself of sins against the sixth and ninth commandments.

6. In matters of restitution you must explain the case to your confessor, and submit to his judgment.

7. You must make known the proximate occasions of your sins.

8. If bound by a vow of chastity or marriage, in sins against purity, you must confess the crime of sacrilege, or adultery.

9. You must also accuse yourself of your unfulfilled vows.

10. You may be required to state that you have previously committed these sins, in order that the priest may prescribe the necessary remedies.

When you have told all you remember say, "I accuse myself of these, and all the sins of my life, and I humbly ask pardon of God, and absolution of you, my father," and then finish the *Confiteor*. If you are so happy as not to have any mortal sin on your soul, conclude thus, "For these and all the sins of my past life, especially the sin of (naming some grievous sin), I am heartily sorry," etc. Listen then with humility and docility to the advice of your confessor, and cheerfully accept the penance he enjoins, and take care to perform it at the time appointed.

O, what joy, what an interior Paradise, what consolation, shall you not experience after a good Confession! Then you shall feel a new life spring up within you. For at the moment the priest raises his hands over you he pours down on you the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. O, if you ardently desired this Divine bath, you would plunge into it every day of your life to be there purified by the merits and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

## SHORT METHOD OF CONFESSION FOR THOSE WHO ARE ACCUSTOMED TO CONFESS FREQUENTLY.

By St. Leonard.

Before approaching the Confessional retire to a quiet part of the Church, and place yourself in the presence of God, and ask His light to know all your sins and the grace to be truly sorry for them; then review all you have done, thought, and said, since your last good Confession. You will easily remember all your sins, if you reflect on the place you have been in, the persons you have frequented, and the business you have been occupied with. If you find only venial faults for which you have not a true contrition, bring to mind some serious sin of your past life for which you are truly sorry, and which you are resolved not to commit again. Then, form an Act of Contrition for this sin. When you enter the confessional, say, "Bless me, father, for I have sinned." Tell all your sins sincerely, and as your conscience makes them known to you, without lies or excuses, or long and unnecessary repetitions. At the end of your Confession, say, "I accuse myself of these and all the sins of my past life, and

particularly against the [*name it*] commandment, or against the virtue of [*name it*]. Having received the penance imposed on you, take care to perform it as soon as possible. Then return God thanks for the great grace of this good Confession.

## PRAYERS FOR CONFESSION.

By St. Leonard.

### PRAYER BEFORE THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

O Jesus, my Divine Saviour, Who enlightenest every man that cometh into the world, pour forth, I beseech Thee, Thy light and Thy grace into my soul, that I may know all my sins, that I may detest them from the bottom of my heart, and that I may confess them sincerely to Thy minister, and thus satisfy Thy Divine justice. Hear me, for the praise and glory of Thy infinite Majesty, for the love of Thy ever blessed Mother, and through the intercession of all the saints, that I may praise and glorify Thee for ever and ever. Amen.

ANOTHER PRAYER BEFORE THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

O most adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, my God, most worthy of all my love, I prostrate myself before Thee. Mercifully regard a most miserable sinner, who would fain be reconciled to Thee by a good confession. But, O my God, as I can do nothing, if not aided by Thee, I implore Thee by the bowels of Thy tender mercy to enlighten me, that I may know all my sins: make me understand all their malice and hideousness, that I may detest them with my whole heart. O Jesus, never failing fountain of compassion, I approach Thee, that Thou mayest cleanse me from all my iniquities. Sun of Righteousness, send the bright beams of Thy Divine grace into the dark recesses of my soul. Divine Physician, deign to heal Thy infirm creature. O infinite love, enkindle the flames of Thy love in my soul that it may love nothing but Thee. And may this confession, I am going to make, be all that Thou wouldst wish it. May it bring about in me an entire change of life, so that I may be fully reconciled to Thee, my God, my hope, and my only love; for Thou art my Saviour,

and without Thee there is no peace for my erring soul.

Mother of God, so charitable to sinners, who desire to repent, assist me to make a good confession. My holy Angel, help me to discover the sins I have committed. My blessed Patron, and all ye saints of heaven, pray for me that I may bring forth worthy fruits of repentance.

### SHORT EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

Examine what sins you have committed since your last *good* Confession. If you cannot find the exact number, you should examine how long you have lived in the habit of committing such sins, and how many times a day or a week you have fallen into them. If after a careful examination you cannot ascertain the exact number, confess the most probable number.

Examine what sins you have committed in *thought*:—whether you have been guilty of rash and uncharitable judgments, and wilfully entertained them ; whether you have deliberately consented to unchaste thoughts or desires, etc.

Examine what sins you have committed by *word*:—whether you have been guilty of telling lies, of impure language, calumny,

detraction, quarrelling, cursing, blaspheming, taking unnecessary or false oaths, etc.

Examine what sins you have committed by *deeds*:—whether you have been guilty of theft, of drunkenness, of reading immodest books, of looking at unchaste objects, of taking improper liberties with yourself or others; consider, moreover, whether you fulfilled your obligations of hearing Mass on Sundays and Holidays of obligation; whether you have broken the fast or abstinence; whether you have fulfilled the duties of your state of life. Parents should examine whether they bring up their children in the fear and love of God, whether they instruct them in their religious duties, send them to Confession, Mass and school, or give their children any bad example. Children should examine whether they love, honour, respect, and obey their parents. Masters and mistresses should examine whether they have neglected to watch over the conduct of their servants; whether they allow them time to hear Mass on Sundays and Holidays, and to frequent the sacraments. Servants should examine whether they pay due respect and obedience to their masters and mistresses; whether they do not injure, destroy, steal, or give away their property;

whether they do not betray their confidence by revealing their secrets, by tale-bearing, by lies, etc., etc.

### CONSIDERATIONS TO EXCITE IN OUR MIND TRUE CONTRITION FOR OUR SINS.

1. Remember, as distinctly as you can, all the sins that you are going to confess.

2. Consider Who He is, and how good and gracious He has been to you, Whom you have so often and so much offended by these sins. He made you—He made you for Himself,—to know, love, and serve Him, and to be happy with Him for ever. He redeemed you by His blood. He has borne with you and waited for you so long. He it is Who has called you and moved you to repentance. Why have you thus sinned against Him? Why have you been thus ungrateful? What more could He have done for you? Ah, be ashamed, and mourn, and hate yourself, because you have sinned against your Maker and your Redeemer, Whom you ought to have loved above all things.

3. Consider the full consequences of even one mortal sin. By it you lose the grace of God. You destroy peace of conscience; you forfeit the felicity of heaven, for which

you were created and redeemed; and you prepare for yourself eternal punishment. If we grieve for the loss of temporal and earthly things, how much more for those which are eternal and heavenly? If we grieve at the departure of a soul from the body, how much more at the death of a soul, which is the loss of the presence of the grace of God? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And "who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Who can endure to be cast out from the presence of God for ever?

4. Consider how great has been and is the love of God for you, that He hath so long waited for you, and spared you, when He might have so justly cast you into hell. Behold Him fastened to the cross for love of you! Behold Him pouring forth His Precious Blood to be a fountain to cleanse you from your sins! Hear Him saying, "I thirst," with an ardent desire for your salvation. Behold Him stretching out His arms to embrace you, and expecting you, until you come to yourself and turn unto Him, and throw yourself before Him, and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am not now, no longer, worthy to be called Thy son." Let the

consideration of these things touch your heart with love for Him who hath so loved you ; and this love will beget true contrition, and make you acceptable to God.

## PRAYERS BEFORE CONFESSION.

By St. Leonard.

O, how great has been my ingratitude! There is not, there cannot be any equal to it. O my amiable Saviour! is this the recompense that I have made for having drawn me forth from the abyss of nothingness, in which I should be now were it not for Thy infinite goodness? Is this the value I set on Thy Precious Blood, shed with so much pain, and so much love for me? Ungrateful wretch that I am, who will give tears to my eyes, that I may bewail, as I ought, the insults which I have offered Thee, my God, and my sovereign Benefactor! Mercy, O my Jesus! My Jesus, mercy! I ardently desire, and I firmly resolve, never again to offend Thee. O my God, how great is Thy goodness in having borne with me so long. O God, of my heart, since Thou hast dealt mercifully with me in the course of my most heinous crimes, do not withdraw Thy mercy, now that I repent

with my whole heart of all my iniquities and ingratitude towards Thee. Yes, my God, my love, my life, my hope, I love Thee with my whole heart, and I detest my sins because they displease Thee. In Thy sacred tribunal of Penance, I will sincerely confess all my transgressions, and with the aid of Thy grace, I firmly resolve never again to commit them.

Mary, Mother of repentant sinners, present this petition to thy beloved Son, and obtain for me true contrition for my sins.

### ANOTHER PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION.

I acknowledge, O my God, that I have merited by my sins to be now in the depths of hell. Thy mercy, however, has given me the means to be delivered from it, by the Confession I am now going to make. I ask Thy grace, O my sweet Jesus, to be able to confess my sins, with a true contrition and firm purpose never again to commit them. It would have been better for me to have died a thousand deaths than to be guilty of them, and I resolve to suffer everything rather than commit them again. Behold me like a criminal at Thy feet. I implore, with sentiments of the most lively repentance, the forgiveness of the many

offences by which I have outraged Thy infinite mercy. I offer Thee all the good I can perform, and all the pains I can suffer, in a spirit of penance, and for the expiation of my sins. I sincerely repent of those and all I do not remember, on account of the punishment I deserve for them; but above all, on account of Thy infinite love and goodness that I have so ungratefully despised and offended, and I resolve never more to commit them.

## PRAYERS AFTER CONFESSION.

By St. Leonard.

I give Thee thanks, O my sweet Jesus, because Thou hast broken the chains by which the demon held me captive. Preserve for ever in my heart the consolation I now feel after this Confession. I thank Thee for having washed my heart in this purifying bath of Thy adorable Blood, in the Sacrament of Penance. And, since it is Thy mercy alone that has preserved me from hell, which I have so often deserved by my sins, I consecrate the rest of my life to Thee. I will henceforth fly from all sin, and the occasions of sin, lest I fall back

again into that abyss of woe from which Thou hast snatched me. Strengthen me, O my Jesus; enlighten me, that I may for the future discover the snares of the devil, that I may resist all his seductions, and that thus I may be able to praise and bless Thee in time and eternity. Amen.

### ANOTHER PRAYER AFTER CONFESSION.

Dear Jesus, be Thou ever blessed for having by Thy pardon freed me from hell and reinstated me in Thy grace. Infinite Goodness, I thank Thee. But, O Lord, I am capable of betraying Thee more than ever, and worse than Judas: I cannot trust myself help me then with Thy grace; hold Thy hands over me, defend me in my temptations, and rather let me die a thousand times than ever again be guilty of mortal sin. O Mary, my Mother, obtain this grace for me.

### RESOLUTIONS AFTER CONFESSION.

O my God, Who art here present with me, I protest that I am determined never more to offend Thee; and I most humbly beseech Thee, that, now, having granted me an entire forgiveness of my sins, Thou wouldst prevent the evil spirits ever more

to have power to draw me or others from Thy Divine service.

Behold me now, my dearest Lord, free, as I hope, from the bonds of my iniquities. Animated by this sweet hope, I trust to live and die in the arms of Thy Divine Mercy. I wish and desire to renew this resolution each time I repeat these sweet words: My Jesus, mercy! I wish to say them a hundred, and a thousand times a day, and to die with these blessed words on my lips—*My Jesus, Mercy! Mercy, O my Jesus!*

# PLAIN INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMUNION.*

### PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION.

PREPARATION for Communion is either remote, or immediate.

1. *Remote Preparation* consists in having no mortal sin on the soul. This disposition is absolutely necessary; for he, who receives Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin, commits a dreadful sacrilege, by daring to approach his lips to the Bread of Angels, whilst his soul is in the hands of the demon. This is a most awful crime, for it is uniting Jesus Christ, living and glorious, to a dead soul, which in the eyes of God is the most disgusting object on earth. A soul that receives Holy Communion in that state, "becomes guilty of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ," according to the Apostle, and places the seal on its own damnation.

The second part of remote preparation consists in being free from venial sin. St. Denis requires great purity in those who

* From the "New Franciscan Manual," p. 244. Translated from St. Leonard's "Via del Paradiso."

wish to approach worthily to this Most Holy Sacrament. But can we say that there is a great purity in those persons who are full of imperfections and passions,—who fall daily into a thousand voluntary faults, such as ambition, avarice, anger, worldliness, luxury in dress, food, and drink, self-love, and above all, who are addicted to bad habits, as gossiping, backbiting, slandering, etc.; who nourish voluntary and continual aversions, bickerings and envy, and a desire of their own ease and pleasure in everything. Can hearts so heavily laden be worthily prepared to receive the Bread of Angels? "*Let a man prove himself and thus eat this Bread.*" And, though this proving of oneself consists in having the conscience free from mortal sin, yet to receive this Divine nourishment with fruit, we ought to strive to be purified also from venial sins, by making an humble Confession of all our sins, mortal and venial. For "*It is not for a man we are preparing a dwelling, but for God.*" (1 Paral. xxix. 1.)

To come to the practice:—It would be well to spend the evening before Communion in retirement and prayer. It would also be very useful to practise some little mortification on the vigil; for instance,

to fast or abstain, or at least to deprive yourself of some unnecessary gratification in eating or drinking, especially at supper the more the flesh is mortified the more easily the spirit can raise itself to God.

You say, you are poor in virtue :—Well, offer to God the mortification of some unruly passion which tyrannizes over you, and your offering will be acceptable to Him. The morning of Communion you should rise more promptly than usual. You should, then, make your meditation with greater care, and employ some time in spiritual reading, and you must be fasting from the preceding midnight, that is, you must not have taken anything by way of food or drink, even as medicine.

St. Louis prepared himself for this heavenly Banquet by prolonged prayer, by many mortifications, and by a rigorous silence. When obliged to take part in any conversation, he spoke only of this Divine Sacrament, and his burning words of love inflamed the souls of all those who heard him. If you strive to do in like manner, O, how well shall your soul be prepared to receive to the full the treasures of Divine grace contained in this Sacrament of Love!

II. *Immediate Preparation.*—Nothing can make us understand better the necessity of

immediate preparation than the words of the ancient liturgy, cited by St. Gregory. "Approach," it says, "with *faith*, *fear*, and *love*." These, assuredly, are the most necessary, and the best dispositions for a worthy Communion.

*Faith*, that is, a vivid faith which makes the understanding bow down with profound respect before this august Mystery, cling to it firmly, without any curious or superfluous scrutiny, and adore the Divinity, almost annihilated, in this thrice-holy Food. Hence, when you approach the Holy Table, say to yourself in the depth of your soul, and with a firm conviction, I believe, and I hold for certain, that I am going to receive into my house the most august Guest that the heavens and the earth can contain. I am now more favoured than Abraham, Tobias and the Patriarchs, when they received angels under their roofs; for angels are only servants, whilst I receive their Master in person, Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, my Father, my Saviour, my King, and the Author of all Good.

I ask then but one thing of you, who approach the Holy Table with such indifference—*faith*, a firm belief, that you are going to receive that God whose very look makes the earth tremble (Ps. ciii. 32);

that you are going to be united to that God before Whom the highest Seraphims fall down in lowly adoration. Have faith, a vivid, loving faith, and then you shall appear at this Holy Banquet with a becoming gravity, hûmility, and devotion. Have faith, and your soul shall be penetrated with a holy *fear;* it will be covered with confusion, and in some sort, it will annihilate itself before its Creator. Then, the words of the Publican and Centurion, shall spontaneously escape you, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner. . . . O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word and my soul shall be healed."

*Love.*—But faith with fear will not suffice; what sets the seal on these requisite dispositions is a tender love; for this Sacrament, above all, is a Sacrament of love. *Having loved His own . . . . He loved them unto the end.*" (John xiii. 1.)

To excite in your heart the Divine flames of His love, strive to approach the Holy Table with all possible respect and modesty, observing the ceremonies of the Church, and without troubling yourself or others by any singularity.

The saints, entirely occupied with the love of God, used different pious practices

to inflame their souls with this Divine fire. St. John Chrysostom imagined that he approached his lips to the Sacred Side of Jesus Christ to imbibe there abundantly the Precious Blood. St. Francis Borgia hid himself in the Wounds of his Saviour, as a sheep strayed from the fold of its shepherd. Others imagined they were under the tree of the Cross, in order to receive on their heads that deluge of Blood which flowed for our salvation. Follow the practice that you like best. Then, at the moment of Communion, make a fervent act of love, uniting your intention to that of the priest, and offer yourself entirely to Jesus Christ as a holocaust of love.

### UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

"Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the Chalice of the Lord unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord."—1 *Cor.* xi. 29. Unworthy Communion subjects us to sin and temptation, disposes us to damnation, scandalizes our neighbour, darkens the spirit, calls down the wrath of God, shortens our temporal life, and deprives us of special graces.—*St. Bonaventure.*

### SPECIAL GRACES OF A GOOD COMMUNION.

1, Remission of mortal sin, at times; 2, remission of venial sin; 3, remission of the temporal punishment due to sin; 4, preservation from mortal sin; 5, increase of sanctifying grace; 6, a pledge, a right to heaven; 7, courage to make any sacrifice for Christ; countless interior graces and effects known only to the pious Communicant and to God.

"I believe that a person receives more graces in one Communion made with good preparation, than in many made without the same preparation."—*St. Bonaventure.*

### INTENTIONS FOR COMMUNION.

(1) The love of God, (2) Devotion to the Passion, (3) Devotion to the B. Virgin, (4) To praise and adore the Divine Majesty, (5) Thanksgiving for God's benefits, (6) To satisfy for our sins, (7) The cure of some predominant failing, (8) Victory over temptations, (9) Perseverance in divine grace, (10) To honour God in his Saints, especially on their Feast Days, (11) To obtain some special favour for ourselves, or for our neighbours, (12) Devotion to the B. Sacrament, (13) Devotion to St. Joseph, (14) To aid the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

## PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.*

By St. Leonard.

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### ACT OF FAITH.

O my soul, reflect seriously on the great truth of thy faith, which teaches thee that thy God is really present in the most Holy Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist. Thou hast here the same Saviour Who was born in a stable, Who died upon the Cross, Who arose glorious and immortal from the dead, and Who is now seated at the right hand of His Father in heaven. O greatest of all consolations! God is here under the mean appearance of bread to become thy food. He, the Almighty, is ready to make His dwelling in thee. Prepare thyself, then, my soul, to receive Him; first, by faith, saying:—

My Jesus, I believe, because Thou, the infallible truth, hast said it, that Thou art really and truly present, with Thy Body

* PRAYERS FOR COMMUNION, by St. Leonard, from the *Via del Paradiso.*—These Prayers for Communion, as well as the "Meditations for Every Day in the Week," are similar to those found in the works of St. Liguori; but as the French Translator of the works of this great Doctor of the Church justly remarks—L. 1, p. 414,—"The holy Author" (St. Liguori) "arranged them according to his own method and made them his own."

and Blood, Soul and Divinity, in this Most Adorable Sacrament. I firmly believe that, in Holy Communion, I receive Thee, Who, born for me in a stable, didst die for me on the Cross: Who, now reigning with Thy Father in heaven, art still hidden under these lowly elements to bestow Thyself on me. I believe these truths as firmly as I believe in my own existence, and to confess them I would cheerfully lay down my life a thousand times. In this faith, and with this acknowledgment, I wish now to approach Thy Divine Banquet. "*I do believe, Lord, help Thou my unbelief,*" for *Thou art my Lord and my God*, Whom I adore, love and desire in this Divine Sacrament.

### ACT OF ADORATION.

O my soul, what art thou doing? What art thou thinking of? In a few moments God will come to visit thee. He, before whom the Cherubim prostrate themselves and the Seraphim veil their faces, is going to become thy Guest. Prostrate thyself in spirit before Him, and with all the heavenly hosts, adore Him and say:—

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee. "Who wast slain, and Who livest for ever

and ever." O Supreme Lord of heaven and earth,—O Divine Humanity, O Sacred Body, saving Victim of my soul, I most humbly adore Thy infinite Majesty from the depths of my nothingness. Most holy Virgin, my tender Mother, Angels and Saints in heaven and earth, adore my God with me, and supply for my insufficiency and coldness. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His Holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. He hath forgiven thee all thy iniquities, and healed all thy infirmities. He hath redeemed thy life from destruction, and crowned thee with mercy and compassion.... *To the King of ages, immortal and invisible, the only God, be all honour and glory for ever and ever.*"

ACT OF HOPE.

My soul, what can be wanting to thee when God deigns to visit thee? Jesus is thy Father, He wishes to give thee an earnest of the glory prepared for thee in heaven. He is thy physician, who can heal all the wounds of thy soul. He is the good shepherd, who will bring thee back on His shoulders to His Father's house. He has pledged Himself to hear thee, and He is both able and willing to fulfil His promises.

He is all-powerful, and therefore can grant thee all thou desirest. He loves thee tenderly, and therefore will bestow His favours on thee. He has given thee His infallible Word, that, "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My Name shall be done unto you." "Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you." Ask then with a lively confidence, and thou art certain to obtain thy request:—

O my Jesus, my hope, full of confidence in Thy divine promises, confiding in thy mercy, and placing all my hopes in the Blood Thou hast shed for me, I trust that in coming to me Thou wilt inflame my heart with Thy love, so that I may live and die loving only Thee, O infinite Good. O merciful God, God of all my hopes, sanctifier of souls, sanctify me, and make me according to Thy own heart. "*Create a clean heart in me, O Lord,*" and make my heart like unto Thine. *In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped: let me never be confounded. Amen.*

### ACT OF LOVE.

O my soul, the great God of infinite beauty and majesty wishes, this morning, to confer a favour on thee that He never be-

stowed on the Seraphim. He desires to come and dwell in thy heart. He desires to unite Himself to thee. O infinite love! O incomprehensible love! And thou my soul, dost thou not burn and glow with love for God, Who shows so much love for Thee?—

O my Jesus, my love, the God of my soul, how good Thou art, how loving, how every way dear and worthy to be loved. I love Thee with my whole heart, with my whole soul, with all my faculties and strength; I love Thee more than my life, more than myself. Thou art the only object of my desires, for Thou art my first beginning and last end. O, that I could at any sacrifice carry Thy most Holy Name through the entire world, to make it known and loved by all men. O God of my heart! I would wish to be immolated for Thy love. I would wish to be consumed for love of Thee. I wish to praise, bless, and love Thee, with the love of Thy holy Mother, and that of all creatures together. I love Thee, my Jesus, my Treasure, my Father, my Life, my Hope, my Paradise, Spouse of my soul, I love Thee, because Thou alone art worthy of all my love. O Lord, I would wish to be all love! Would that I could see Thee loved by all men!

Mother of pure love, most holy Mary, help me to love Thy beloved Son, Whom thou dost desire to see loved by all creatures.

### ACT OF CONTRITION.

O my soul, dost thou forget the crimes thou hast so often committed against God? Ah, how many times hast Thou not afflicted His adorable Heart? How often hast thou not crucified Him again by mortal sin? Repent, then, from thy heart, for all this ingratitude, and for the many crimes thou hast been guilty of, and say to Him in the bitterness of thy soul :—

O my Jesus, it is true, by my sins I have crowned Thee with thorns, I have nailed Thee to the Cross, I have pierced Thy Heart with a lance, and I have crucified Thee again. With fear and trembling I approach Thee, having nothing to trust in but Thy infinite goodness and mercy, for my heart and body, my thoughts and tongue are defiled by my many crimes. I acknowledge that my sins deserve a thousand hells, but Thy mercies are infinitely greater than all my iniquities. Look, therefore, on me, with the eyes of compassion which obtained mercy for Thy executioners. O sweet Jesus, remember that "loud cry that was

heard for Thy Reverence," "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." May that same voice be heard now, by Thy Father, Whom I have so grievously offended. May that Precious Blood flowing from Thy Wounds wash away all my iniquities, that, purified in soul and body, I may worthily approach to the Holy of Holies, and receive from Thee the kiss of peace and reconciliation. Mother of repentant sinners, intercede for me.

### ACT OF HUMILITY.

My soul, thou art now going to receive the Blessed Body of Jesus Christ. Art thou worthy to receive Him? Hast thou well considered what thou art, and Who God is? If thou wert a seraph of love, and hadst all the love of the angels, and the virtues of all the saints, yet wouldst thou not be worthy to receive Thy God:—

My God, I will say to Thee with the Seraphic Father, St. Francis, "What am I, and Who art Thou," that I should dare approach Thee? Is it possible, O my Jesus, that Thou, the God of infinite purity, shouldst desire to come and dwell in my soul, which has been so long the abode of Thy enemy, and the source of so much sin. I feel, O Lord, Thy great Majesty,

and I know my own misery. I would wish through reverence to remain far from Thee, but if I withdraw from Thee, O my life, whither shall I go, to whom shall I fly, or what shall become of me? No, I do not wish to withdraw from Thee, but, on the contrary, I desire always to draw nearer and nearer to Thee. Thou dost wish, and invite me to receive Thee for the good of my soul. I come, then, O my amiable Saviour, to receive Thee this morning; I come covered with shame and confusion at the sight of my sins, but full of confidence in Thy mercy and in the love Thou dost bear to me. "*Lord, I am not worthy Thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word, and my soul shall be healed.*"

ACT OF DESIRE.

The happy moment has arrived, O my soul! the time has come when Thou must receive thy well-beloved Spouse. Behold the King of kings, the Lord of lords; behold thy Friend, thy Father, thy Spouse. Behold Him who is the joy of Paradise. Behold God Himself:—Behold, the spouse cometh, go forth to meet Him. But how is it that thou art so cold, and that thou dost not burn with an ardent desire to be

nourished with this adorable Food? If thou hadst to receive thy Lord but once in thy life, with what fervour wouldst thou not receive Him? And is it because this ineffable Gift is at all times at thy disposal that thou art so tepid, so distracted, when there is question of securing so great a Good? Souls burning with love seek this source of all joy, as ardently as the thirsty stag seeks the fountain of living waters. Arise then from thy lethargy, O my soul! and excite in thyself an ardent desire to receive Jesus Christ, thy Lord, and thy God! Aspire after this Sovereign Good, seek Him with tears, with sighs, and, above all, with a heart filled with gratitude, and say :—

Come, O Divine Food of the elect, and nourish my soul. Come, O furnace of Charity, and consume my whole being. Come, O Fire of love, and inflame my heart with Thy divine ardours. Come, O my Father, my Spouse, my Treasure, my Life, my only joy. Come, Thou Who art the only object of my desires. Come, O Thou light of souls, Comforter of the afflicted and refreshment of the heart. Come, O Thou "the desire of the eternal hills." Come, O Joy of the angels, Glory of Paradise, and Beatitude of the saints.

Come, O Thou Who art the heaven of heavens to me. Come, for my soul languishes and faints with the desire of being united to Thee. O, delay no longer, for Thou hast wounded my heart with the dart of Thy love. I cannot live longer if Thou dost not come. Come, then, Jesus, my God, my love, the Spouse and life of my soul!

Most holy Virgin, I am now going to receive thy Jesus, my God, and thy beloved Son! I wish to receive Him from thy hands. Give Him to me, as thou didst give Him to the shepherds, to the Magi, and to the holy Simeon. Do thou, thyself, prepare my heart to receive Him with love. I ask this favour of thee for love of thy own pure and Immaculate Heart, and through the intercession of all my Patron Saints.

### ACT OF OFFERING.

O my God, I wish to offer Thee this Communion, in union with the Communion of the Blessed Virgin, of Thy holy Apostles, of Thy Saints; and in union with all the holy souls who receive Thee to-day, or shall receive Thee to the end of time. I wish to make all these acts of preparation, with the same fervour they had or will have,

uniting them to the merits, the virtues and divine holiness with which Thou didst receive Thyself at the "Last Supper, under the mystical veil of the Eucharist."

May the Church militant and triumphant supply for my want of preparation, in receiving Thee, the God of my heart, and only love of my soul.

### PRAYER BEFORE COMMUNION.

By St. Bonaventure.

To receive worthily such an august Sacrament a thousand years of preparation would not suffice; how then, unhappy wretch that I am, can I be worthy:—I, who, every day, render myself guilty of sin:—I, who persevere in my iniquity, and approach so often without preparation? Oh! would that a flood of tears would wash my soul defiled with so many crimes. Am I then, in reality, O Lord! to place Thee in such a dwelling? But Thy mercy infinitely exceeds my misery; and thus, full of confidence in Thy goodness, I dare receive Thee, and approach, poor, and sickly that I am, a Doctor full of sweetness, in order to find my health in the remedy Thou hast prepared for me. The weaker I am, and the more my wants are great, O Lord! the

more shall the immensity of Thy tenderness be manifested in my regard. I will then approach my God, with confidence, because His mercies are infinite. I will taste with Him the delights of His blessings. I will enter the dwelling of my Spouse, and I will take up my abode with Him, in order that I may never more be separated from Him. I do not wish for the future to be united to anyone else. In Him alone I shall find a happiness without end.

## PLAIN INSTRUCTIONS
ON
## THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION.

Abridged from the Works of St. Leonard.

St. John Chrysostom teaches us how we ought to make this thanksgiving:—"After Communion," he says, "retire into a quiet place, and reflect attentively on the great honour God has bestowed upon you, in coming to reside in your heart. Meditate on the incomprehensible Gift you have received from the hand of God Himself: a Gift so great that, neither you, nor I, nor

any mortal can imagine a greater, and still less would dare ask it. Contemplate, with the eyes of faith, the angels who surround you, filled with astonishment at the sight of their Creator thus humbled and buried in your heart. They do not cease to sing His praises, and you have nothing to say to Him? All your members ought to become so many tongues to praise and thank Him, Who has made Himself your very food. We feed on Him, we are united to Him, and we become one body and one flesh with Christ. What a condescension of Divine love," concludes the holy Doctor, "hence you should no longer converse as a man among men, but you should live as an angel among Angels, and having become their fellow-citizen, you should imitate their language and borrow their sentiments." "It is now," says St. Teresa, "you ought to treat with God about all your spiritual necessities. What a precious time is this when Jesus remains, as on a throne in your heart, ready to bestow His favours on you." And yet, alas! it is precisely at this time you have nothing to say to God. You read a few words in a book, or recite some vocal prayers, and nothing more. O what a folly to lose such a precious treasure so

easily. Leave books to some other time, and make a good use of these few moments when Jesus speaks to you. The Countess of Feria, the illustrious child of St. Clare, found her delights in conversing with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and could not withdraw herself from Jesus Christ after Communion. So that, she was justly called the Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament. She was asked one day what she did during the long hours she spent at the foot of the Altar. "Ah," said she, "I would remain there during an entire eternity. Do I not find here the Divine Essence that must be the eternal food of the elect? My God! what do I do before the Blessed Sacrament? But rather what do I not do? I love, I praise, I return thanks, and I offer myself to Him. I ask His graces. What does a beggar do before a rich man? What does a sick man do before his physician? What does a thirsty traveller do before a pure fountain of water? or a hungry man before a table well furnished?" Thus this holy servant of God reasoned. And you, you do not know what to say, or what to do, during the time of Comuunion? Then, indeed, you ought to cast yourself in spirit and truth at the feet of your Divine Master, and ask all the graces you require to ensure

your salvation. Do like the poor blind man of the Gospel to whom Jesus said: "*What wilt thou that I do unto thee?*" "Lord," answered the blind man, "that I may see." Say then, "O Lord, behold me at Thy feet. I am miserable and blind, enlighten me, discover to me the depth of my misery, grant me perfect purity, and true charity." Make a good resolution to employ all the day religiously, by observing a greater recollection and preserving yourself as much as possible from all worldly distractions, visit the B. Sacrament, attend at vespers, and read a spiritual book: thus you will "allow no part of the good day pass you:" and thus also you will preserve the fruit of your Communion. As to frequent Communion follow the advice of your director; but as regards your own dispositions, strive to be worthy to receive this heavenly Food every day; for it is certain that "He who eats this Bread shall live for ever."

WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST.

Take ye and eat, this is My Body.—*Matth.* xxvi. 26. I am the Bread of life. . . . This is the Bread descending from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may

not die. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever, and the Bread which I will give you is My Flesh for the life of the world. . . . Amen, amen, I say unto you, Unless you eat of the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh my Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in Him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me.—*John* vi. 41 to 58.

## PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION.

### AN ACT OF FAITH.

BEHOLD, my longing desires are now satisfied. My God, and Almighty Sovereign has come to visit me: Jesus is in the centre of my heart. I can now say with the Apostle, I live no more in myself but in Jesus, and Jesus lives in me. I am all His, and He is all mine. O infinite love of my God! Who descends on the tongue and enters the heart of a creature, so vile and unworthy as I am. My soul, what art thou

doing? Now that thou art so intimately united to Jesus Christ, dost thou say nothing to Him? Be recollected; banish every distracting thought; press Him lovingly to thy heart: adore Him and say:—

O my Jesus, my life, my love, the only joy of my heart, Thou art welcome to the poor dwelling of my soul. How long have I sighed for this happy hour! But, O Lord, where art Thou, where art Thou come? Into this heart of mine which is harder and colder than the stable of Bethlehem. A heart that has caused Thee more sorrow and pain than Thy bitter agony and shameful death: since not once but a thousand times have I renewed Thy bitter passion and death, by my sins. O Lord, what dost Thou find in me but coldness and indifference, whilst all my affections are centred in creatures? O my God, how hast Thou come to dwell in such a heart? I would fain say with St. Peter, "Depart from me, O God of Majesty!" Depart from this soul, so stained by sin, I am not worthy to lodge such a Guest as Thou art. Go and repose in those pure souls who love Thee so tenderly and faithfully. But no, O my amiable Saviour! do not withdraw Thyself from me; for if Thou dost, I am

lost. O God, my Hope! I will not let Thee go, for Thou art my Supreme Good, for Whom I have so earnestly longed. I wish, O God of my heart! to live and die in Thy loving embraces. Mother of God, angels and saints, holy souls who love God, lend me your affections that I may welcome my beloved Lord. Amen.

### ACT OF THANKSGIVING.

Adorable Trinity, one God, most worthy of my love, I thank Thee with my whole heart for having given Jesus to me, a poor sinner; I thank Thee for having given me Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist; I thank Thee for having invited me to receive Him; and, O sweet Jesus! how can I ever thank Thee sufficiently for having deigned to visit me? O spotless Virgin! O all ye holy angels! O all ye blessed citizens of heaven! O all ye souls glowing with purest love of God! enable me to thank my Lord incessantly for His infinite condescension. But how far does all this fall short of the thanks due to God! surely the thanksgiving even of all heaven falls immeasurably short of what is due to an infinite God; and what is there in heaven or on earth that could compensate Him for

His infinite benefits? What then am I to do, but offer, O my sweet Jesus, Thy own love itself in thanksgiving for Thy infinite love. Let all Thy tender mercies, Thy gracious condescension, and Thy attributes which are infinite, render unto Thee that honour and gratitude which Thou so eminently deservest. O adorable Trinity, one God, I thank Thee through Jesus, and do thou, O Mary, my sweet Mother, thank Jesus for me. Now let my heart overflow with gratitude, and may Thy divine Majesty accept and be content with this infinite thank-offering. O supreme and everlasting Good! to Thee alone be praise, adoration, and glory from all creatures through endless ages. Amen.

### ACT OF OFFERING.

Jesus, my loving God, Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me, and gratitude requires that I should give myself wholly to Thee. Thou hast sanctified me by coming to dwell in my heart, and henceforward I will, by Thy Divine assistance, be entirely consecrated to Thee. My eyes which Thou hast opened to the true light shall be Thine; my ears which have heard Thy gentle invitation shall be Thine, and this tongue

which has been consecrated by Thy adorable Body shall be Thine for evermore. I offer and sacrifice to Thee, this morning, O my most sweet Saviour, all that I have, and all that I am, my entire body and soul.

Accept, O Divine Majesty, the sacrifice of a sinner, who has been hitherto the most ungrateful on earth. Do with me, O Lord, and dispose of me as Thou pleasest. Come, O consuming fire of Divine love, and consume in me whatsoever is mine and is not pleasing to Thee. O omnipotent love, may I fulfil Thy Divine will in all things, and live henceforth for Thee alone. O most holy Mother of God, present this offering to thy most beloved Son, and obtain for me the grace that it may be accepted, and that I may be faithful until death. Amen.

## ACT OF PETITION.

My soul, what art thou doing? Dost thou not know that thou art now the living temple of thy Redeemer? This moment is too precious to be lost, when thou canst obtain whatsoever thou askest. Now, thou canst obtain of the all-powerful and loving God whatever grace thou dost require. The heavens are open at this moment, and the Eternal Father looks down on thee

with ineffable pleasure, in contemplating Jesus in thy heart, Who is the object of all His complacency. Now, more than at any other time, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels and all the saints intercede with God in thy behalf. Do not lose an instant of a time so precious, and be solely occupied in treating about the affair of thy salvation. Thou possessest an all-powerful Monarch, a Father the most amiable and generous, a God, who is fidelity itself; what then canst thou fear? Banish, then, all distracting thoughts, enliven thy faith, enlarge thy heart, and begin by asking great graces,—graces worthy of God:—

My most amiable Saviour, since Thou art come into my soul to enrich me with Thy graces, and since Thou dost desire that I should ask them from Thee, hear me, I beseech Thee, through the bowels of Thy Mercy. Give me, O good Jesus! an increase of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition. Grant me, humility, patience, purity, and all virtues. Change this erring heart, and detach it from the perishable things of this world. Give me a new heart, perfectly conformable to Thy holy Will, a heart which will seek only what is pleasing to Thee, and aspire only to Thy holy love. "Create a clean heart in me, O God." I

acknowledge I do not merit this; but Thou, my loving Jesus, Who hast come to dwell in my soul, dost merit it for me. Thou, the great God of heaven, art able to grant graces exceeding great: grant me, then, through the merits of Thy most holy Mother, and the love Thou bearest Thy Eternal Father. (*Here pause for some time, and ask of God, with a lively faith, the graces you stand most in need of. Do not forget to pray for the souls in Purgatory, and for the conversion of sinners, and especially for your relatives, and for the Translator of these prayers*). Adorable Trinity! all powerful God! hear my prayers: Thou canst not refuse my petitions, however unworthy I am; for I am not alone in asking them, Jesus is with me. If I do not merit to be heard, Thy beloved Son is infinitely worthy to be heard in my behalf: He prays now with me, and for me.

Eternal Father! remember the promises of Jesus Christ, Who has assured us that all we ask in His name shall be granted us. For the love then of this Son, Whom I have in my heart, hear me, and grant my petitions.

# MORNING PRAYERS.*

By St. Leonard of Port Maurice, O.S.F.

We ought to prevent the sun to bless Thee, O God! and adore Thee at the dawning of the day.—*Wisd.* xvi. 28.

O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at the break of day.—*Ps.* lxii. 2.

IT is of great importance to give our first thoughts to God in the morning. St. Nilus teaches us that there are demons who have no other duty but to collect the first affections of the morning; he calls them preventing devils, as they strive to surprise us at the moment we awake from sleep, by insinuating into our minds frivolous or sinful thoughts. To guard against this, from the moment we awake, let us raise our hearts to God, by holy thoughts, calling on the sweet name of Jesus, with that beautiful ejaculatory prayer: *My Jesus, mercy!*

The little child awakening seeks its mother, and is not content until it reposes on her bosom. Let us do the same; as soon as we are awake, let us cast ourselves into the arms of our good mother, that is, the infinite mercy of God, in order that He

* From the "New Franciscan Manual."

may preserve us by His grace during the day. Be sure to rise at an early hour, six o'clock if possible, and when the time arrives, according to the advice of St. Teresa, "Leap out of bed as if it was on fire."

Whilst dressing, let us remember, we are in the presence of a God of all holiness, and accompanied by our Angel Guardian, who observes all we do.

When dressed, let us prostrate ourselves before the crucifix, and with heartfelt gratitude and sincere humility, repeat the following prayer to the most Adorable Trinity:

### OFFERING TO THE MOST ADORABLE TRINITY.

In the name of the ✠ Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. R. Amen.

50 days' indulgence; 100 days, if made on taking holy water.

Most Holy Trinity! I believe that Thou art here present with me. I adore Thee from the abyss of my own nothingness. I humbly thank Thee for having brought me safe through the dangers of the past night. I offer myself entirely to Thy honour and glory this day. My God, my love, infinite goodness, infinitely worthy of

love, aid me to-day, preserve me from sin, save me from all dangers, and keep Thy helping hand stretched over me lest I betray Thee.

Then recite *Our Father*, once, and *Hail Mary*, three times, in honour of Jesus and Mary. After each *Hail Mary*, add:

"Through thy Virginity and Immaculate Conception, O most chaste Virgin, obtain for me purity of soul and body."

Then say, *I believe in God, I confess*, and the following Short Acts of Contrition, Faith, Hope, and Charity.

## SHORT ACTS OF CONTRITION, FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

### ACT OF CONTRITION.

O my God, I am very sorry I have sinned against Thee, because Thou art so good, and I will not sin again.

### ACT OF FAITH.

My God, I believe in Thee, and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it, and Thy Word is true.

### ACT OF HOPE.

My God, I hope in Thee for grace and glory, because of Thy promises, Thy mercy, and Thy power.

### ACT OF CHARITY.

My God, because Thou art so good I love Thee with my whole heart, and for Thy sake I love my neighbour as myself.

Seven years and seven quarantines; plenary, once a month, and at the hour of death.

Then with all the fervour of your heart make the following act of offering, for on this especially depends the good use of the actions of the day.

### INDULGENCED DAILY OFFERING.

Eternal God, behold me prostrate before the immensity of Thy majesty. I humbly adore Thee, and offer Thee all my thoughts, words, and works of this day. I intend to do everything for love of Thee, for Thy glory, and for the fulfilment of Thy Divine will, in order to serve, praise, and bless Thee, to be enlightened in the mysteries of holy faith, to secure my salvation, and to hope in Thy mercy; to satisfy the Divine justice for my many grievous sins, to assist the holy souls in purgatory, and to obtain the grace of a true conversion for all sinners. I desire, in fine, to do everything in union with that most pure intention which Jesus and Mary had during life, and the saints in heaven, and the just now on earth. Would that I could write down this inten-

tion with my own blood, and repeat it as often as there be moments in eternity! Accept, my God, my good will; grant me Thy holy blessing and efficacious grace never to commit a mortal sin throughout the course of my life, but particularly on this day, on which I desire and purpose to gain all the Indulgences which it is possible for me to gain, and to be present in spirit at all the Masses which will be celebrated to-day in the whole world, that I may apply them to the souls in purgatory, and free them from all pain. Amen.

100 days once a day; plenary once a month.

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## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

*Nothing defiled can enter the Kingdom of God.—Matt.* vii. 21. A soul stained with the least imperfection cannot enter into heaven before it has been purified either by penance, in this life, or by the fire of purgatory, in the next. This is the reason why virtuous persons examine their conscience.

There are two examinations of conscience; one is called a *particular*, and the other a *general* examination. The first should be made about noon on some be-

setting fault: the second, in the evening, on the general faults of the day. St. Francis de Sales says, that we should go to bed as we go to confession, that is, after having made an examination of conscience, which is justly called the mirror of the soul. How many hours do the votaries of the world pass before the glass to adorn a body that shall be very shortly the food of worms; and shall we not find a few minutes every evening to examine our conscience, and to adorn our immortal souls?

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### PRACTICE OF ST. LEONARD.

From his "Resolutions."

I will make two examinations every day, one at noon, the other in the evening. In the first, I will make a rapid review of my heart, and see if it preserves its interior peace, founded on a true humility, and an ardent love of God.

The examination of the evening shall be longer. Placing myself in the presence of God, I will ask His light to know all the faults I have committed during the day, then I will briefly run over the principal actions of the day, in order to render myself an account of my thoughts, words, actions, and communications with my

neighbour. After having discovered my many faults I will ask God's pardon by acts of contrition, with a firm purpose of amendment.

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### EVENING PRAYERS.

Before retiring to rest I will commend myself to all my Patron Saints; and then, I will say the acts of contrition, faith, hope, and charity, with a protestation that I wish to live and die in the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and to breathe forth my soul in forming the most perfect act of the love of God. I will practise the exercise of St. Vincent to obtain a happy death, and I will commend my soul to God as if it were to be the last night of my life, saying, "Into Thy hands," etc. I will say one Our Father, and Hail Mary in honour of St. Barbara, to obtain the grace of the sacraments at my death. Then I will implore my Angel Guardian to assist me during my sleep, saying, "O Angel," etc. I will sprinkle my cell with holy water, saying, "Sprinkle me," etc., and I will form the intentions that every pulsation of my heart may be so many acts of Divine Love.

I will lie down modestly . . . . taking the

cross of my beads, in my hands, and I will strive to sleep in this position, repeating frequently, "My Jesus, Mercy."

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## SHORT EVENING PRAYERS.

According to St. Leonard.

In the name of the Father, etc.

O my God, I believe that Thou art here present, I adore Thee, and I love Thee with my whole heart. I return Thee thanks for all Thy benefits, particularly those I have received this day. Give me light, O my God, to know the sins I have committed this day, and grant me grace to be truly sorry for them. (*Here pause awhile, and examine your conscience on the thoughts, words, deeds, or omissions, by which you have offended God*). *Then say from your heart,* O my God, I am sincerely sorry for having offended Thee, because Thou art so good, and I resolve never more to be guilty of these sins.

Our Father, Hail Mary, I believe in God, Confiteor.

O DOMINA MEA.

My Queen! my Mother! I give thee all myself, and, to show my devotion to thee,

I consecrate to thee this day my eyes, ears, mouth, heart, myself, wholly and without reserve. Wherefore, O loving Mother, as I am thine own, keep me, defend me, as thy property, and thine own possession.

EJACULATION.

My Queen! my Mother! remember I am thine own.

Keep me, defend me, as thy property, thy own possession.

100 days, once a day; plenary, once a month.
40 days for using the ejaculation in time of temptation.

Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; Lord Jesus, receive my soul.

Holy Mary, be a mother to me. O my good Angel, watch over me this night. Blessed St. Francis, and all ye angels and saints of God, pray for me.

May our Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and bring us to life everlasting; and may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

When in bed say three *Hail Marys*, with the ejaculation, as in Morning Prayers.

Those who have time can say the *Rosary* and the *Litany of the B. Virgin.*

## SHORT RULE OF LIFE.

From St. Leonard.

I. Rise early, six o'clock, if possible, and as soon as dressed, place yourself on your knees, and make an offering to God of your thoughts, words, and actions of the day, in union with the merits of Jesus, Mary, and all the saints. Then form the intention of gaining all the indulgences in your power, during the day, and of offering them in suffrage for the souls in purgatory. See "Morning Offering," p. 178.

II. Remember the presence of God in all your works, and often renew the morning offering, repeating that loving aspiration, "My Jesus, mercy."

III. Never commence, or do anything you shall be sorry to have done at the hour of death.

IV. Read a chapter from a good book every morning.—The Imitation of Christ, The Spiritual Combat, Life of Christ, by St. Bonaventure; Devout Life, by St. Francis de Sales, Lives of the Saints, etc., are excellent works for spiritual reading and meditation.

V. Approach the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion every month.

VI. Never miss an opportunity of hearing Mass, assisting at Benediction, and paying a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, at least every month.

VII. Avoid idleness, bad company, parties of pleasure, and all occasions of sin.

VIII. Be kind, charitable, patient, and forgiving to all.

IX. Shun with horror all backbiting, calumny, swearing and profane words.

X. Beware of novels and light literature; and read no suspected book without the special permission of your spiritual director.

XI. On Sundays, Holidays, and Fridays, perform the Way of the Cross, in order to gain the indulgences, and to excite in your heart the love of Jesus Crucified.

XII. In the evening examine your conscience, and make a sincere act of contrition for the faults committed during the day. Never retire to rest without reading a chapter from the "Lives of the Saints," or some other good book, as in No. IV.

XIII. Strive to have a great devotion to our Seraphic Father St. Francis; and beseech him to obtain for you grace to imitate his virtues, especially his humility, charity, and love of the Cross.

SHORT RULE OF LIFE FOR THOSE WHO ASPIRE AFTER PERFECTION.

I. Besides the above, they must approach the Sacraments every week, or oftener, according to the advice of their spiritual director.

II. They must make, at least, a half hour's meditation every day.

III. They must practise some interior and exterior mortifications every day.

IV. They ought to make a day's retreat every month, as a preparation for death. This need not interfere with their necessary duties.

V. They must make a spiritual Communion several times a day.

VI. They will perform the spiritual exercises of a retreat every year, if possible.

VII. They will receive crosses and afflictions with resignation, ever saying with our beloved Lord, "Not my will but Thine be done."

VIII. They should ever live in the presence of God, and like our Seraphic Father, be able to say, "My God and my all."

IX. They must always have Jesus Crucified in their heart, words, and actions, and like that great saint, love nothing else but Jesus Crucified. "My love is Crucified!" (St. Francis.)

THE END.

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